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SPRINGHEEL JACK

THEY SAW THE STRANGE THING TAKE A FLYING LEAP, CLEARING THE BROAD MOAT
AS IF IT HAD BEEN A GUTTER.

OR,

The Masked Mystery of the Tower.

A Story of Strange Facts of Many
Years Ago.

BY COL. THOS. HOYER MONSTERY,
Champion-at-Arms of North and South America,
AUTHOR OF "THE DEMON DUELIST," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TOWER OF LONDON.

THE last visitor had departed, and the gloomy old
Tower of London had sunk into its usual quiet for
the night.

General Reid, the Constable of the Tower, was

smoking the long hookah, which he had kept as a reminiscence of the bright skies of the East, in the midst of the murky fogs of London.

His black and obsequious servant, whom he had also brought with him from India, had retired, after filling the bowl and setting fire to the dark, sweet-scented tobacco. He was now standing in the back part of the room, waiting to be dismissed to his supper, when his master said to him:

"Chundoo, what has become of Miss Rose?"

Miss Rose was the general's daughter, who was in the habit of pouring out his tea in the evening, after the lapse of an hour or two from his late dinner.

Chundoo shrugged his shoulders, and looked as politely ignorant as possible.

"General sahib wish to see Missy Rose?" he said inquiringly. "Me go find her, if the sahib wishes."

"No, never mind," said the old general, with a puff and a frown. "I suppose she has something else to do, before she comes. You can go, Chundoo. I'll ring when I want you."

Chundoo made the deepest of salaams, and backed out of the room; while the old general, who was getting stout and disposed to slumber, after his dinner, gradually let the mouth-piece of the hookah drop from his lips, and was soon snoring gently, with his head inclined on his breast, as he sat in his big arm-chair, with the last rays of the declining twilight shining in on him, from the window which overlooked the river, at which he had been accustomed to sit, every evening, since he had been, by the favor of the good King George, assigned to the easy berth of Constable of the Tower.

It was a pleasant life he led; but he had done a great deal of hard work before he earned the place in which he was passing the decline of his days.

He had seen many battles; sieges innumerable; hazardous embassies to native princes; in all of which he had not been unmindful of the fact that he was a Scotchman born, and had his pockets to fill, against the time when he would be retired from service, on half-pay.

He was said to have come back from India with that comfortable sufficiency of this world's goods known as a "plum" in England,* but, in the accumulation of this competence, he had done his duty so well by the crown and the company, that, when he grew too old for further service in the field, he had been called home and established in the post of Constable of the Tower, which he had held for twelve years, and bid fair to hold for another twelve after it.

The old Constable was a widower, with one child, a daughter, whom he idolized, spoiled and tyrannized over, by turns. Rose had been born in India, but had come to England after the death of her mother, when her father followed her, in a few months to his native land.

She was now a girl of eighteen, tall and slender, with a profusion of blonde hair, a delicate complexion, health not too robust; but a great capacity for all sorts of romantic and imaginative stories, of which her memory was full, to overflowing.

The general had become so accustomed to have her pour out his tea in the evenings, that he felt ill-tempered at her absence, for the least fraction of a second, at the appointed time; but he had too much pride to let this be seen before his Hindoo servant, and therefore he had taken his usual doze, though Rose was not there, waiting for his waking.

But the old gentleman had lived too regular a life to omit waking at the instant he usually did, and, when he at last opened his eyes, he found that his daughter had not yet come back.

The only light came from the few glimmering embers of the sea-coal fire, that burned in the old-fashioned fire-place; and by this light the old man saw that the room was vacant, and for the first time, he felt a vague sense of alarm.

He rose from his chair slowly, and went toward the door, which he opened.

The light from the swinging oil lamp, in the long, stone corridor, shone on the gray flags of the pavement and the vaulted roof overhead; but there was no living being in sight.

Far away in the recesses of the building, he heard the clash of arms, as the sentry over the magazine down in the basement of the Tower paced to and fro on his beat, and an occasional echo of voices and laughter in the guard-room told that things were going on as usual.

But for all this, he felt uneasy at the absence of his daughter, and was just stepping out into the corridor to investigate, when his ears were surprised by the sound of a shriek, which he knew came from the Armory of the Tower; the voice, that of his own daughter.

The shriek was repeated, and the old general caught up a sword from the table where it had been lying since he came in from evening parade, and rushed toward the Armory, shouting, as he went:

"Guard! Guard!"

With a celerity that surprised himself—for he was getting stiff in the joints—he ran up the stone steps at the end of the corridor, and into

the great Armory, when he uttered a cry of terror, as he saw Rose at his feet on the floor, pale and insensible.

There was a light in the Armory which burned all night; and this—a swinging lamp, fed with whale-oil, hung from the ceiling—cast a dim radiance over the figure of the insensible girl, and shone on the long rows of martial figures of the kings of England in their armor, grimly guarding the secrets of the Tower of London.

There was nothing else in the room, as far as he could see, but the silent lines of men in armor and the girl on the stone floor before them; but he heard the sounds of men's feet on the steps outside, and a tall sergeant of the Beef-Eaters came rushing into the Armory a moment later, followed by a dozen men.

The sergeant seemed to be dumfounded at the sight of what had happened, and stood for a little while speechless, when he was recalled to his senses by the sharp voice of his chief, saying:

"What the deuce are you staring at, Hodge? Some of you fellows take up the lady and carry her down to my rooms."

The order recalled the yeomen to themselves, and they hastily raised the young lady and carried her down-stairs, when they were met, as they came out of the Armory, by a young officer of the garrison who was on duty that night, and who asked hastily:

"What is the matter, men?"

Then, as he caught sight of the stern face of the old Constable, he added apologetically:

"I beg your pardon, general; but I thought something had happened."

"And so something *has* happened, Mr. Howard," the old officer snapped out. "Why don't you attend to your duties better, sir? Something has got into the Armory, while you were away, and has frightened my daughter nigh to death."

His words seemed to strike the young officer in a tender spot, for some reason or other; for he colored deeply, and then turned pale, as he, for the first time, saw the body of the senseless girl borne past him, and murmured to himself:

"Heavens! who would have thought it?"

The old Constable did not hear him speak, for he was too much occupied with the care of his daughter, and the men were carrying her down-stairs, into the apartments of the chief officer of the great building.

Lieutenant Howard rubbed his forehead, like one bewildered, as he saw them go down-stairs. When they had departed, and he was left alone, he stared round him at the grim-looking statues in armor and muttered to himself:

"What can have happened? I left her here not five minutes ago."

He noted the spot where she had been lying, for it was marked by a little spot of blood on the stone pavement, where the girl had struck her head in falling, or done something else, which made the mark.

It was right in front of an armed figure, in the steel mail that had once covered the martial form of England's greatest warrior, King Edward III.

The great wooden war-horse towered above the spot, and the figure on its back seemed to be staring overhead, as if serenely indifferent to anything that went on in these times.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

THE old general, as soon as he got into his rooms, began to call out excitedly:

"Surya! Where the deuce is that confounded ayah? Surya, come here, you lazy black hussy!"

The second call summoned into the room a thin woman, with very sparkling black eyes, and the outlandish dress of an Indian *ayah* or nurse. Surya was the ayah who had brought Rose to England, and had been her faithful servant ever since; for the household of the old general, like that of most Anglo-Indians of his day, remained the same, after he got to England, as far as he could make it, as it had been in India; and all his servants were Hindoos, from Chundoo, the *kitmagar* or butler, to Surya, the ayah.

Surya seemed to be used to the irascible ways of her master; for she came forward, quite calmly, to take care of her young mistress, and set to work, as if she had done the duty, required of her, many a time before.

The old general, who had faced the fire of many a battle-field without flinching, was completely unnerved by the peril to his daughter, and stood trembling by the quiet ayah, till the efforts of the dark-skinned woman were successful; when the girl heaved a deep sigh, and opened her eyes.

When they fell on her father, she smiled, as if the sight reassured her, and then they wandered to Surya, and over the room, as if she had begun to think she had never left it.

The old general turned and made a silent sign to the big sergeant, who had ventured to hover near the door, in his sympathy for the young lady. The sergeant was a veteran, who had seen service with General Reid in India, and had often taken little Rose in his arms, when she

had been a baby; so that he had ventured to come in, when he ought to have retired with the rest of the men. The general made a signal to him to get out of the room, and honest Hodge turned very red, and stole out, on tip-toe.

With all his caution, however, the sergeant was too large and solid a man to retire noiselessly; and the girl heard his creaking boots, when she started and rose on her elbow, staring at Hodge. The sight seemed to waken up some memory in her, for she cried out suddenly:

"What is the matter? Where have I been?"

Then she covered her face with her hands, and shuddered violently, murmuring:

"Oh, take him away! Take him away!"

The old general, who thought that something had made the sight of Hodge odious to her, said soothingly:

"Don't be alarmed, my child. It's only poor old Hodge. Nothing can harm you here."

But the words did not seem to reassure her; for her terror seemed to increase, as she stared round the room, repeating:

"Are you sure? Are you sure? Did you see it? Did you see it?"

"See what?" asked her father, now thoroughly puzzled. "What has happened to you, Rose?"

The girl sat up on the couch, and looked at her father and nurse, as if she were slowly recovering her senses.

"It is not possible it is a dream," she said, in a half-doubting way. "Tell me, where did you find me? Was it in the Armory?"

The old general, without pausing to consider whether he should tell the truth or not, said:

"Why of course it was; but—"

He was interrupted by another shriek from his daughter, as she cried:

"I knew it! I knew it was not a dream! Oh, sir, save me, save me! The creature will kill me, if it catches me again."

And then she shuddered so violently that the old general became more alarmed than before, and hastily ran out into the corridor, to tell honest Sergeant Hodge to run for the surgeon, and tell him to "come at once, as the Constable's daughter was very ill."

Hodge started off down the corridor, in a hurry, and, as soon as he was gone, General Reid came back and sat down by his daughter's couch, doing the most sensible thing he could have done.

He contented himself with smoothing her hair with his hand, and letting her feel the touch she knew so well, saying nothing; while the ayah chafed her mistress's hands, and bathed her forehead with eau-de-cologne.

Under this soothing treatment the agitation of the girl gradually decreased, and she became calmer, till at last she dropped into a doze, from which she awakened almost immediately with a start, staring round at her father and the ayah, and thence into the corners of the room, as if she expected to see something there.

What she would have said is uncertain; but at that moment the sound of the doctor's footstep in the corridor, served to divert her mind; and the physician came in, smiling, as a lady's doctor should, to inquire:

"Well, well, and what is the matter with our wild rose, to-night? Too much green tea, I'll be bound. A case of nerves. Come, come, let me see your tongue, and feel that pulse of yours. Don't talk. I'll ask any questions I want, after I've tried your pulse."

And, by engaging her attention, he managed to quiet her down, and gave her an opiate, which soon stupefied her.

Then, and not till she was asleep, he said, to the old general, in a low tone:

"Come out here, if you please. I want to say a few words to you, about this affair."

The general, who seemed to be quite overcome by the mysterious danger to his daughter, obeyed the injunction, and led the way to his private room, where he pointed the doctor to a chair, and sat down, as if awaiting the questions of the other.

But the doctor did not seem to be in the mood to question any one; for he sat, thoughtful and stern, by the fire, and it was not till the Constable coughed, to rouse his attention, that he said slowly:

"Reid, this is a very strange affair. I did not ask the child any questions; for I saw that her system had received a shock, and she might have gone into fits; but Hodge has told me all about it. Something has frightened her, almost to death in the Armory. Can anything get in, without the knowledge of the guard?"

The general shook his head.

"Nothing bigger than a rat or a mouse. But Rose is not so silly as to be afraid of them. I can't understand the thing."

The doctor pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"Very strange indeed! I don't understand it. Is there any one who was with her, at the time?"

"I cannot think so. Rose had a habit of going into the Armory, after the visitors had gone for the day. She hates crowds, and likes to make up all sorts of stories to herself, about the

*A hundred thousand pounds sterling, or about half a million dollars.

men in the armor. I missed her at tea-time, but I had an idea that she was out on the river, with young Howard, in the state barge—I—by the by, where is that young fellow? He must know something of all this."

And the general hastily rung his bell, and said to Chundoo, who answered it:

"Tell Hodge to give my compliments to Mr. Howard, and ask him to step up to my room."

Then, when Chundoo had gone out, he said:

"The young fellow and Rose had been a good deal together of late, but I haven't minded it. He hasn't a rap, to be sure; but then he stands in the line of succession, and the old duke has no children."

The doctor was an old friend of his; so he talked openly. In fact, every one in the Tower was an old friend of everybody else, with the exception of the garrison, of which Lieutenant Howard was a member, which was composed of troops shifted at times, but generally composed of one or the other regiments of the "Household," otherwise known as the Foot Guards.

Doctor Tatham was the regular surgeon of the Tower, and also a fashionable physician, who took but little trouble with his Tower patients, but drew his salary regularly.

When Reid spoke of young Howard, the old doctor pursed up his lips, and presently observed:

"Well, you know your own business best, Reid; but it seems to me that I would not encourage the affair. Those Howards are all tarred with the same stick, you know. This young fellow may be all right; but he has a scandalous reputation."

The old general shook his head testily.

"Confound it, Tatham, that's not the same man at all. It's Oliver that does all those wild pranks. George is one of the quietest fellows I ever saw. But if he was with Rose, at any time this evening, he must know something of what frightened her. And here he comes."

For there was a step in the stone corridor, and the next minute the young officer came to the door, and stood there, saluting respectfully, and inquiring:

"Did you wish to see me, general?"

The old doctor, who was generally cross-grained when young men were in question—probably from memories of what he had been when he was young himself—could not but admit, as he looked at the young man, that he was as fine a specimen of his class as he had ever seen.

George Howard showed the mental effect of many generations of brave and wise ancestors in every line of his face; while his broad shoulders and well-knit form evinced that he had not degenerated physically.

He wore the uniform of the Coldstream regiment, to which he belonged; and looked every inch a soldier.

"I sent for you, Mr. Howard," said the old general, "to ask you if you could throw any light on the fright my daughter has suffered. Have you been with her this evening?"

The young man had shown, to the keen eyes of the doctor, some uneasiness, when he first came to the door; but that uneasiness seemed to be redoubled now, at the question of the old general; for he colored deeply and stammered:

"General—I—I—can't answer."

CHAPTER III.

INVESTIGATION.

THE old general turned his face on the young man; a deep flush beginning to rise, that showed how angry he was getting.

"What do you mean, sir?" he growled, in a tone that George knew, from experience, would soon become a roar, while the doctor looked as if he had suddenly discovered a lunatic at large in the Tower.

"I mean, general," said the young officer, in the same respectful, but hesitating way, "that I can't answer that question, without the permission of the young lady herself."

Had some one in the ranks suddenly jumped out in the middle of a parade and slapped General Reid in the face, he could not have looked more utterly outraged and savage, than he did at that moment. As for the old doctor, he turned purple, and had to take out his snuff-box to conceal his feelings.

The general staggered up from his chair—he was too old and stiff to jump—and roared, in the tone he assumed when he was particularly incensed:

"You infernal young puppy, how dare you talk to me in that way? Do you suppose that a father is bound to ask his daughter's permission, as to what he shall say? I ask you, have you been in the state barge, with my daughter, to-night, or not? Is that a question you can answer?"

"Yes, general, I was there; and the men rowed us up to Hampton Court, and back to the Tower stairs. Is that all you wish to ask?"

The response seemed to pacify the old man a little; for the color faded from his face, and he said more quietly:

"What time did you get back?"

"About half an hour after sunset, sir. Miss Reid wanted to see the moon rise over the river, and the boat went slowly as we came back."

"And did you leave her at the stairs, or take her back to my rooms, sir? I have not seen her since dinner-time; and, as you were the last person with her, I want to know when you saw her last."

But the young officer's lips seemed to be suddenly sealed again by the question, for he kept silence, and the irascible old Constable flushed redder than before, as he snapped out:

"Well, sir, why don't you answer? One would think there was some crime between you and my daughter, from the way you behave."

Howard turned redder than before, as he said:

"That is not it, sir, but—"

And here he looked at the doctor so expressively that Tatham got up, saying:

"The young gentleman won't speak till you are alone, Reid. I'll go."

But the obstinate old general snapped out:

"There is no need for you to go. You are the doctor, and you ought to know about this thing. Speak out, Mr. Howard, and tell what you have to tell. I will be responsible for the doctor not making any bad use of what you say."

Thus adjured, the young officer went to the door and shut it, after looking into the passage, as if he feared that some one might overhear him. When he came back, he spoke low and rapidly, as if he wanted to get through the task as soon as possible.

"The fact is, sir, that Miss Reid and I were in the Armory, not five minutes before the trouble occurred. We were talking, and she was looking at the armor, speaking about what a strange thing it would be if the men who had once worn the suits should come to life again."

"Yes," said the father, as he saw the young man hesitate at this point. "And what happened next?"

Howard colored deeply.

"Well, sir, the fact is, I suppose I was foolish, and I ought to have spoken to you first; but the fact is— Well, sir, you must have seen my feeling toward the young lady; and we were alone; and it occurred to me that there was no time like that—so—so—I spoke out to her, and offered her all I have in the world. That is the reason I hesitated to tell you before a gentleman who is not one of your family."

The old Constable listened with a frowning brow, but he spoke in the driest of tones, as he said:

"Well, sir, go on. That was not what frightened her, was it?"

"No, sir. In fact, sir, we had about arranged the matter, and that I was to speak to you in the morning, when I heard the call of the guard below, and had to leave the young lady, promising to return at once. I feared she might be nervous, all alone in the Armory, and asked her if she had not better go down to your rooms; but she told me that she did not mind it, and that she liked the romantic thoughts that always crowded round her in the Armory. So I left her and went down-stairs, and the guard had not gone over its round when I heard the screams. The rest you know."

"And that is all you know?" said the general thoughtfully.

"All, sir, on my honor. I cannot imagine what can have got into the Armory, to frighten Miss Reid."

Here the doctor suddenly interposed:

"Where is that brother of yours—Oliver, I mean? Isn't he in the Guards also?"

The question seemed to be *mal-apropos* for the young officer drew himself up, as if offended, and said stiffly:

"I am speaking to General Reid, sir."

The old surgeon shrugged his shoulders; for he was too old to take offense at the refusal of the young man to admit him on terms of confidence. He took out his snuff-box, and indulged in a pinch, observing:

"Very good, sir. Only asked for information."

"Where is Oliver?" asked General Reid in his turn, as if the question interested him also.

"It is his day off duty, sir; and he is not in the Tower," said Howard stiffly. "I have no idea where he goes; for his tastes and mine differ, as you are aware."

A ghost of a smile flitted over the old general's face; for the difference between the brothers was well known to the garrison. There were not wanting those who said that they could not be real brothers at all, for they not only were unlike, but seemed to hate each other as enemies, and were never seen together, save when duty compelled them to stand near each other, in the ranks of the officers at parade.

"Ay, ay, we might know that," he said to the doctor, in a half-whisper. "Well, Mr. Howard, there is only one thing to do, and that is to find, from my daughter, what has happened, when she is not in such a nervous condition as to-night. In the mean time, I positively prohibit any more talk between you, on the subject you have mentioned. You have taken a liberty, as you are aware; and it must not be repeated. You can go to your duty, sir, and remember to make a thorough inspection of the Armory every half-hour, to find what was there, if it can be done without disturbing the young lady. Good-night, sir."

He nodded coldly, as if to dismiss the other,

and George Howard turned on his heel and left the room; not quite certain how his news had been received by the father of the lady whom he loved.

When he had gone, the doctor looked at the general, and the old officer shook his head in a grave way.

"There is something in all this I don't understand," said the physician. "I had an idea that the child had been agitated in some way; and, when the young man told about his being with her in the Armory, I thought he had come to the secret; but that can't be it now. Is there no way any one can get into the Armory, and hide there?"

The Constable seemed to be musing.

"No, I can think of none. There is only one staircase, and that is the one we went up by. If any one had been there, trying to frighten Rose, and made his escape, we must have met him on the way down. But there was not a sound in the room, or we should have heard it."

"Then the thing that did it, must be there yet," said the doctor slowly. "I say, Reid, suppose we were to make a general search in that place, and hunt the rascal out. It must be some one in the Tower; for no one from outside could have got into the Armory."

The old general brightened up at once.

"Wonder I never thought of it before. By Jove, I'll do it at once."

He rose, and, followed by the doctor, went down to the guard-room.

The sentry at the door, seeing him, and fancying that he came on some ceremonious night-alarm, or inspection, called out to the corporal, and the clash of arms, inside the guard-room, told that the soldiers were rousing from their benches, and turning out in haste, with their arms.

The Constable of the Tower waited till the guard was in its place, when he said to old Sergeant Hodge, who was in his command:

"Where is Mr. Howard?"

"In his room, sir."

"Call him out at once."

Hodge saluted; wheeled on his heel to obey the order; and, very soon after, the young officer of the night came into the room.

When he saw the general and Dr. Tatham, he seemed to be somewhat surprised, but saluted his commander at once, and asked:

"What are the orders, sir?"

"I am going to make a thorough search of the Armory, Mr. Howard; and want you to come with us," said the Constable. "I am determined to find out, before this night passes, what it was that got in there, and half killed my daughter."

"Very well, general," was the reply.

Then Howard turned to the soldiers who were in the guard-room, and gave them the order.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GHOST OF THE TOWER.

THE men of the guard were enough for the search they required, and Howard posted a sentry at every turn in the passage, as they went up to the Armory, with orders to signal anything suspicious, that they saw or heard, to the next man in the chain.

When they arrived in the long hall, which was used for the effigies of the kings in their armor, the place looked just as it had many a time before, with its silent rows of chargers, and the grim, steel-clad images, in the deep saddles of long past ages.

The hall was gloomy enough at the best of times, in broad daylight; but, at night, with the light of the single swinging lamp to cast deeper shadows on the stone pavement, it was enough to arouse superstitious thoughts in the breast of the most hardy; and the soldiers, who were for the most part originally ignorant rustics, cast uneasy glances around them, as they followed their officer into the room.

Howard sent for some lanterns to make a better light, and proceeded to search the place thoroughly, but without avail.

There were the big wooden horses, and the men in armor; but nothing alive could be found there, and, after a long and painful search, they had almost concluded to leave the mystery alone, when Howard suddenly observed:

"If anything alive is in here, it has got into one of those suits of armor."

He had hardly made the remark, when there was a deep groan from one of the darkest corners of the room, and the soldiers all started together, while Hodge ejaculated:

"By Heavens, it's the ghost of the Tower!"

He spoke under his breath, but the silence in the Armory was so deep, that his words sounded plain, and they were echoed by another deep groan from another part of the room entirely, at which one of the soldiers began to move stealthily toward the door, when he was recalled by the stern order of the young officer:

"Come back here, sir. What are you about?"

The man halted, with the instinct of military obedience; but his eyes wandered from corner to corner, and, when a third groan echoed almost over his head, Howard heard the rattling of the soldier's arms as he trembled violently.

When he looked at the rest of the guard, he saw that they were all pale, and that the

name of the "ghost of the Tower" had frightened them half out of their wits, brave though they were at most times, being all veterans of active service.

"Stand your ground, men," he said, sharply. "It is only a trick of some scoundrel who has got in here, and is hidden 'somewhere.' Don't you know there are no such things as ghosts?"

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when one of the men uttered a cry of fear, and pointed to the opposite wall of the room, on which the shape of a figure was slowly outlining itself.

And a horrible figure it was, with long skinny fingers, like claws, outstretched, glaring eyes, that glowed like fire; while more groans were heard in every quarter of the room, and one of the soldiers fell down in a fit.

Then even the restraints of discipline gave way, and first one fled, with a shout of terror, out of the doorway which was furthest away from the horrible thing on the wall. Then there was a stampede of all the men, and the officers were left alone with the shadowy form on the wall before them.

Even George Howard's nerves were tried to the utmost, though he was not superstitious, but he drew his sword and made a rush at the specter, when it vanished with a mocking laugh, and the next moment old General Reid called out, in a tone of fear and amazement:

"My God! what's that?"

He had been staring at the long lines of men in armor, and one of them had suddenly become alive, besides changing its appearance in a very wonderful manner.

It was the very statue in the armor of Edward III. at whose feet he had found his daughter, and the whole figure was now lighted up with a pale flame of fire, while the man in the armor had risen to his feet in the saddle, and stood there.

Then came a great clash, as the creature, whatever it was, leaped from the back of the wooden charger turning a somerset and came striding toward them.

The old general drew the sword he had put on when he started on the search, and made a pass at the figure; when, with a wild laugh, that had a hollow sound in the recesses of the helmet, the strange being put out one of the long claws with which they now saw that its hands were armed; caught the weapon by the blade, and wrenched it from the nerveless hand of the old man, when it caught him with tremendous strength, threw him on the pavement half stunned, and made a grab at the doctor who was unarmed.

The great claws were almost on the physician, when the latter, with a happy inspiration, threw his snuff-box at the creature, and the deed had its effect.

The man in armor turned round and ran away with the swiftness of an antelope, making huge leaps as he went, and at every leap uttering a cry as if in pain or terror.

Howard, who had seen the whole thing, now gave chase to the flying figure; but, with a suddenness that was the most amazing part of the whole apparition, it turned round on him, came at him with a bound, and caught at his naked sword with its long talons, as it had done at that of the old general.

But George Howard was young and vigorous, a very different antagonist to the general, and he did not let the sword be caught. On the contrary he made pass after pass at the strange thing opposite to him, more than ever convinced that it was human, till the sounds of shouts, in the passage outside, showed that the soldiers were coming back, ashamed of their fears, and that help was at hand.

"Now I have you, you scoundrel!" he shouted, and with that he pressed his antagonist closer than before.

Then the queer being he was fighting suddenly leaped back and turned a somerset in the air, kicking the swinging lamp, which was the only illumination of the place, so that it went over with a crash, leaving the long Horse Armory in total darkness. Then George felt something strike him in the darkness, which he knew to be one of the big gauntlets of the strange being, and when he struck at it with his sword, the monster was gone.

Where it had gone to, no one could tell.

The soldiers came rushing in, with a quantity of torches, as if they wanted to gain courage by keeping a great light; but when they got in and picked up the Constable of the Tower, there was no sign that anything had been disturbed.

The statue of Edward III. was still in its place, and there was no symptom that the armor had been tampered with.

Howard, sorely puzzled and alarmed at the whole affair, went over the whole room again, with all the men, the light of torches shining in every place he could think of, but in vain.

The Armory was absolutely untenanted, and no one could tell which way the eerie being, that had left such tokens of its presence on their faces and bodies, had gone.

Howard even had the soldiers take the armor of the king from the horse, to see if it were possible that some one might be there yet, but the wooden figure that had always occupied it was all that was found.

Completely puzzled at the whole thing, he reluctantly gave the order to march the guard down-stairs, and left only a single sentry at the door, to give the alarm if anything occurred during the night.

Then he went to the guard-room, and passed the rest of the night awake, but with no result, as far as the return of the mysterious visitor was concerned.

When the morning dawned over the city of London, and the long Armory was fully visible, he paid it a special visit, just after sunrise.

The light of day revealed something that had not been visible by the light of the torches.

The statue of King Edward III. (or rather the suit of armor which had once been worn by the king) was in its place as before; but the back-piece of the cuirass had a smoke-stain on it, as if some flame had been applied thereto, and Howard remembered that the figure that had startled them so much had come from thence.

The stain was a small one, but plain, when looked at by the light of day, and it set Howard to thinking.

He had recognized the fact that the ghost, which had so terrified the superstitious soldiers, must have been produced by a magic lantern or something of the sort, and the smoke-mark on the back of the cuirass showed him where the lantern had probably been placed.

But this left him as far as ever from the question where the person who had held that lantern had gone to.

That he had been a real person, and one of great strength and agility, he knew, from the fierce fight in which he had himself been engaged, with the monster.

His face was still marked with a long scratch, which had been inflicted by the huge claws, and yet the creature had disappeared from the midst of the soldiers, without leaving a trace behind!

Where was it gone to, and what was it?

Thinking over this, he was startled by the voice of his brother, Oliver Howard, who had just come into the Armory.

CHAPTER V.

TWO BROTHERS.

OLIVER HOWARD was the younger brother of the officer of the guard, and as great a contrast to him as could be imagined in personal appearance and character.

George was tall and broad-shouldered, with blue eyes and fair hair, which he wore long, in the fashion of the time, but unpowdered; while Oliver was slender and dark, with the most brilliant of black eyes and olive skin.

George was quiet and reserved in his manner, stiff in his demeanor at most times; while Oliver was a great talker, restless in his movements, free and easy in his behavior, to an extent that scandalized a good many worthy people.

The only thing in which they resembled each other was in the fact that both were handsome men in face and figure, though in such very different styles.

George was English, of the old Norman-Saxon type, big and brawny; while Oliver looked and acted so much like a Gypsy that most people were convinced that he must have Gypsy blood in his veins in some mysterious way.

Those who were acquainted with his parentage, however, knew that he was the brother of George, by the same mother and father, so that the idea was never alluded to by any but strangers.

Oliver looked like a Gypsy, and acted like one. He was an inveterate gambler and horse-racer, given to low taverns, where his more aristocratic brother never deigned to be seen, while his many eccentricities had given him the name, among his brother officers of the Coldstreams, of "Oliver the Devil," or "Oliver Imp." The last had been generally shortened to "Imp," pure and simple, and he actually seemed to glory in the title rather than otherwise.

George had not heard him coming and was startled by the sound of his voice, close behind him; for Oliver had a light, stealthy step, and a way of coming on one by surprise, which was one of the things that repelled George, though he could hardly have told why.

Now he came behind his brother, and saluted him with a rallying, sarcastic sneer:

"Holloa, Sobersides, what makes you so full of duty this morning? Has the devil broken loose, or has old Stick-in-the-mud ordered a general scouring of the tin plates?"

George turned round on him sternly.

"I don't understand you, sir," he said.

He always called his brother "sir," and seldom greeted him save when the other forced the conversation on him.

In fact, the coldness between the brothers was marked by every one who knew them; and George, being the silent one, usually got the blame of being an unnatural brother.

Oliver laughed, with a sneering sound.

"Don't know what I mean? I mean old Reid. Has he been ordering the armor cleaned up, or what has brought you here at this time of morning?"

"I think, Mr. Howard, that it would be fitter

for a mere ensign of the Coldstreams to speak of the Constable of the Tower with more respect than you are showing," said George, severely. "I am here to investigate something which happened last night, and if you had been here, I might have been inclined to lay the blame on some of your wild pranks. Miss Reid was seriously alarmed by some scoundrel who hid in the Armory, and if he be found it will go hard with him."

Oliver looked surprised, and grew grave at once.

"Why, brother," he said: "I was but jesting, and you should know as much. What has happened?"

George gave him a short account of the mysterious appearance of the night before, and the younger brother listened to it attentively.

When George had finished, Oliver said:

"And how do you suppose the fellow got out of here, after he frightened you all so famously?"

"That is the mystery," said George, thoughtfully. "There is no way I can see."

Oliver whistled in his usual thoughtless fashion, and walked up and down the room, looking at the different places that had been mentioned by his brother, in the story he had heard.

"There is no way he could have got off," he said at last, "but out of the window."

George cast a glance in that direction.

"He could not have done that," he said.

"The windows are sixty feet from the ground, at least."

Oliver whistled again.

"Then it must have been the devil himself," he said, carelessly. "Anyway, I can't stop to think about it. By the by, George, I had a famous time, last night, at the Fives Court. There was little Jimmy Spring, the butcher, beat a man forty pounds heavier than he in twenty rounds, and I won a pot of money on the event."

George drew himself up, for he hated the low associates of his brother.

"I am sorry," he said, severely, "that a brother of mine, who bears the name of Howard, should so far forget himself as to go to such places. I have no desire to hear anything as to the prize-fighters of this kingdom."

Oliver laughed sneeringly.

"Ay, ay, you were always a milksop. If a chairman was to give you a crack on the crown, you would not know how to take care of yourself, I'll warrant. Well, I haven't time to spare to talk to you now, for it is my turn to go on guard to-day, and I feel so uncommonly sleepy, after being up all night, that I must positively take a snooze, before guard-mount. Good-by."

And he sauntered off, whistling, while George continued his search over the room, but with no further result.

Then, as a last resort, he examined the windows, the careless suggestion of his brother having directed a vague suspicion that way.

They were, as he said, at least sixty feet from the ground of the great Tower, and there was a moat at the bottom, with a draw-bridge and all the apparatus of medieval war, which had been preserved in the modern time.

Nothing came of his visit, save the discovery, on one of the window-sills, of a mark in the dust that covered it, as if some one had been there.

It was in one of the windows rarely visited, being high above the floor, and George had been tempted to let it go; for he had to take a step-ladder to get up to it.

When he saw the mark in the dust, he congratulated himself on having gone there, and opened the casement to look out.

As he did so, something dropped out, and, by a rapid glance, he saw that a rope was hanging from the window, from where it had been jammed in a crevice, and that it had fallen into moat of the Tower below.

The way of escape of the strange creature that had made such a scare in the garrison was now plain, and Howard hastened to the guard-room to tell Sergeant Hodge, and get the news spread in the garrison; for he knew that their superstition had been greatly excited by the apparition of the previous night, and a natural explanation of the the thing would, he thought, go far to making a repetition of the visit impossible.

The sight of the window and the rope had its effect on the soldiers, and made more than one of them ashamed of his terror of the previous night, now that it was brought home to him in the light of day.

They did not say much before Howard, for they were all old soldiers, and used to the restraints of discipline, which forbid them expressing any opinion before an officer; but he saw in their faces that the story relieved them, and went to his room, comforted by the thought that, if he persevered, he would eventually find out the secret.

He ventured to call at the doors of the Constable's rooms to ask after the health of the young lady who had suffered so severely by the fright of the previous night, and was relieved to hear that Rose was sleeping still, not having recovered from the effect of the powerful opiate

which had been administered to her by Dr. Tatham.

The hour for guard-mount approached, and the old Constable of the Tower, who very often came down to see it, made his appearance, and eyed the new guard thoughtfully, all the time the ceremony was proceeding.

The new officer of the guard was Oliver Howard, and the Constable seemed to take great interest in watching the way in which he went through the ceremony, which the volatile young man had a habit of slighting.

But on this particular morning Oliver was as grave as a judge, and went through his duty as well as a veteran could have done.

When the new guard had been posted and the doors were opened to the public, which has its daily fill of gazing at the wonders of the venerable building, the Constable beckoned to Oliver, and the young man followed him to his rooms, where the commander of the post asked him:

"Mr. Howard, you have heard of what happened last night, I presume."

"Yes, sir," responded the young man, without evincing any special interest.

"Then you will please remember that it is in the duty of your post, to-day, to see that no one gets a chance to hide in the building in any way whatever. I do not wish a repetition of the fright of last night."

"It shall not happen," said Oliver, with a sort of sneer on his dark, handsome face. "If I had been here last night it should not have happened at all, sir; but as you know, that brother of mine is given to moon-gazing, and a dozen might have got in for all he knew. I hear that they found a rope dangling from the window by which the man got down, after he had frightened my bold brother."

His tone was openly sarcastic and scornful.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

THE old Duke of Norfolk, who headed the lords when they went into the House, had the double distinction of being the premier peer and the most ill-tempered man in England.

With more riches than any other lord in the House, and all that heart could wish for in the way of splendor and comfort, he was yet an unhappy man, for the reason that he was childless, and that he knew, after his death, his inheritance would go to a distant kinsman, who in the mean time was plain Mr. Howard.

And this fact made the old duke ill-tempered and morose, the more so that he was getting old, and that his health, never very good, had in the last years made him a prisoner in his chair.

Yet it was a curious thing about him, that he would not give in to the inevitable, and that, though he knew the next heir to the title was young George Howard, he had never in any way recognized him, while the young man, on his part, had never called on his aged kinsman, through pride.

George's younger brother, Oliver, had not been so scrupulous, and had frequently visited at the house, with the result that the old duke was more incensed against his next heir every time that he received a visit from the heir's brother. He had been a wild youth in his own time, and was suffering the consequences in his old age, wherefore there was a certain bond of sympathy between him and the wild young guardsman; but of all this George was profoundly ignorant, for he never deigned to inquire where his younger brother had been, and the other never volunteered the information.

Yet it was a strange thing that, on the day after the incident in the Tower, George Howard, for the first time since he had been in London, took the resolution of making a formal visit to his aged kinsman, and found himself in front of the old duke's residence, about three in the afternoon.

A gorgeous-liveried flunky took his card, with an air as if the visitor were a mere nobody, and the young officer was left to cool his heels in an ante-room for nearly twenty minutes before the gorgeous flunky came back, to say, with more respect than he had shown at his first reception of the little square of pasteboard:

"His grace will be 'appy to see you, sir."

Then George went up the broad staircase, and was ushered into a large library, where the old duke, looking as morose as usual, was seated in a big easy-chair, with his foot up on a stool, in from of him, wrapped in flannel, the result of a severe twinge of the gout.

But though the old noble was cross and surly, he could not forget the habits of a lifetime, and had not ceased to be a gentleman; for he spoke as soon as his young kinsman entered the room, saying, in a weak voice:

"I must apologize, sir, that I am unable to rise to receive you; but illness must be my excuse. The gout and I are old friends; but the scoundrel has a way of squeezing my foot, that is not altogether agreeable."

"I hope your grace will not trouble yourself to rise on my account," said George politely. "I am young, and your grace is no longer as young as of old time. I hope that you will

soon recover, sir, and be well again for many a year."

He took the seat to which he was motioned, as he spoke; and the old duke eyed him sharply; for it was the first time that he had seen his young kinsman. The old man had sharp eyes and heavy brows, and he wore a sort of uncertain smile on his lip, as he said slowly:

"Hope that I shall be well for many a year? That is well said, sir; but where would your fortune and title be, then?"

George colored slightly; for he had not expected that the old duke would speak out so plainly; but he answered at once:

"God grant your grace long life, is my wish. I am not one of those who wishes to step into the shoes of dead men, before their time. It is not my fault that I was born where I was, your grace, and I have reproached myself, of late, that we, who are near kinsmen, should have seen so little of each other."

The old duke bent his brows thoughtfully.

"I am grateful for your sentiments, sir," he said slowly; "but there was no reason we should feign an affection that we do not feel. You are the next heir to the title, and, since I have seen you to-day, I am free to confess that you will grace the robes well, as far as looks go. But the love between us can never be great, and the sight of you always calls to mind the fact that, some day, I must die, and you step into those shoes of which you speak so scornfully. Nay, sir, spare me your protestations. They are unnecessary. Instead of making them, let me ask what has procured me the honor of this visit, aside from that kinship which you have forgotten till to-day?"

George hesitated for a moment, and then looked up at his old kinsman.

"You are the head of the house of Howard, duke," he began.

"That goes without saying, sir," the other interrupted rather sharply. "If I were not, I might never have seen you to-day."

George bowed.

"It is as the head of the house that I come to your grace. I contemplate marriage in a—"

Again the duke interrupted him, this time, with positive rudeness.

"I have no power to make or mar you, sir, and my consent is unnecessary."

"I am aware of that, duke; but, being the head of my house, I thought it but a matter of courtesy to come to you, and tell you."

"You are exceedingly polite, sir."

The tone of the duke was sarcastic.

"Furthermore," pursued George tranquilly, "to ask you whether you have any objection to the daughter of General Reid, Constable of the Tower, as the future duchess?"

The old duke raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed, sir? And suppose that I told you that I had a decided objection to anything of the sort, would that make any difference in the match?"

"It would, duke."

The old man's face was screwed up into a queer expression as he said:

"Then you came here for a purpose, after all?"

"I did, your grace. The fact is that, General Reid has forbidden me to mention the matter to his daughter, and I have concluded that, if your grace pleases to say a word for me, the obstacle would be removed at once."

Then he sat back in his chair, and watched the face of the old noble who seemed to be overwhelmed with astonishment.

For several minutes there was a dead silence in the room, and then the duke asked sarcastically, looking at the young officer as if he were a strange animal:

"Sir, did you ever hear of Jack Howard of the Blues, who went by the name of Handsome Jack?"

"I have only heard his name, your grace. He was, I believe, my uncle."

"He was, sir, and had the reputation of being the most impudent scamp in all England. I find that his nephew has the advantage of him in the qualities he most affected, as in looks also. I don't deny, sir, that you are a confoundedly handsome young dog; but when you come to ask me to intercede with the father of some lady, to get him to give his consent to make a duchess out of his daughter, and take the title out of the direct line into your own—confound it, sir, you take too much liberty. The future duchess, indeed! Why, confound your impudence, you young puppy, do you suppose that I am too old to marry yet? I may make a duchess, if I want to, out of the first Gypsy I pick up on Hampstead Heath. Go and fight your own battles, sir. Don't come to me about them. Good-morning, sir, and better sense to you."

And the old gentleman rung the bell on the table beside him, at which the door opened instantaneously, and the tall flunky appeared, to whom the duke snapped out:

"Show the door to this gentleman at once."

Howard had risen, when he was thus peremptorily dismissed, and, as he swept to the door, he observed, bitterly:

"As your grace pleases. I thought that the duty of a young kinsman would be taken as it was meant, kindly; but, since you repudiate it,

I am left only one resource. *There will be one less mourner at your funeral.*

The old duke listened with his head averted, and his cheek paled slightly, as it always did when death was openly mentioned before him.

He cast a malignant glance at the retiring figure of the young officer, as he went through the door, and chuckled as he said:

"I may disappoint you all, some day. I am not too old to have an heir yet, sir."

George Howard made no answer, but went out; and the old man, as soon as the young one was gone, began to shiver and shake, as he always did after any agitation.

The thought of death was never welcome to him, and it had been growing more hateful as the prospect grew nearer.

He looked round the room, and muttered to himself:

"Ay, ay, I'll have to leave it all—all. Can't take a thing with me. What a queer wakening it will be in the next world, if there is any. One moment the Duke of Norfolk, with all the world at my feet; the next, nobody at all. I wonder if that will be the way."

But, as there was no answer to the question, which so many rich men have asked themselves before, the old man grew gloomy and thoughtful, till he was roused by a twinge of gout in the foot, that he had almost forgotten, when he began to curse and swear at the pain and his young kinsman, whom he consigned to a very hot place, as he grumbled away.

In the mean time, George was on his way back to the Tower.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GYPSY.

As George Howard approached the Tower, he had to pass through a good many narrow, dirty streets, near the city, and in one of these he encountered a tall, dark man, evidently a Gypsy, who begged alms of him, with the request:

"For the love of a poor man with a large family, your honor, who hasn't a morsel to put into the mouths of one of them, give a few pence."

The young officer looked at the tall and well built figure of the other, with surprise.

"What does a man of your size do, begging?" he asked incredulously. "Why, you are big enough to be enlisted in the Guards. You needn't go round asking alms."

The man did not seem to be hungry, although his clothes were ragged, and his feet bare. The weather was warm, so that there was nothing in his appearance calculated to inspire pity and the question of the young officer was natural.

The Gypsy favored him with a spiteful look.

"I don't want no soldier business," he said. "I know all about it. I don't want to get tied up at the triangles,* or have to take off my hat to every officer that passes. If ye don't want to give a cove a penny, go to the devil."

The transition from whining mendicancy to open insolence was so sudden, that the young officer was irritated, and gave the other who had got right in front of him, a push to one side, that would have sent most men into the gutter, for George was strong.

On the Gypsy it produced little or no effect, and he grinned as he said:

"Try it again, my covey. I ain't the sort they makes sogers of, but I can fight too."

So saying, he put himself into an attitude of decidedly pugilistic intent, crying:

"Come on, my hearty. I'm the man to warm your jacket."

For a moment the young officer hesitated. He was of a phlegmatic temperament, and not given to fighting; but, when he was excited, he forgot all this.

His face paled to the lips as he saw the menacing attitude of the Gypsy; and, without waiting to think of what he was doing, he sprang at the other like a tiger, and sent in a shower of hard and well-directed stabs, with both fists, as if he were fencing, with a small-sword in each hand.

He made no pretense of defending himself; for he had never been given to boxing, and only thought of hitting the other.

Had he been less powerful than he was he might have fared badly, but, as it was, he drove the Gypsy back, striking as he went, and finally knocked him flat into the gutter, when the man raised his hands, crying, with the blood streaming down his face:

"That'll do. Your honor's a better man than I thought. I knocks under."

George stared at him, with some surprise.

"Get up," he said. "You are a scoundrel to beg, with that tough frame of yours. If you want to enlist, I'll take care that the sergeant brings you down to your bearings pretty soon. I've no charity for such as you."

The Gypsy slowly rose and wiped the blood from his face, where George's fist had nearly broken his nose. He did not seem to be at all put out by the encounter.

"Your honor's a better man than I thought, and I'll go with your honor," he said, civilly.

* "Triangles," were made to tie up a soldier when being flogged.

enough. "I swore I wouldn't never go under no gentleman, but when I meet a *man*, I'm not the one to bear malice for a fight. If your honor will take me into your company, I'll be proud to sarve there."

"Come on, then," said George shortly.

With that, he took his way to the Tower, and the Gypsy followed him as quietly as if he had known him all his life.

When they got to the guard-house, the young officer said to the sergeant of the guard:

"Here is a man who wants to enlist. Tell the corporal to take him over to the recruiting office, and see if he is sound."

The sergeant stared at the recruit, as much as to say that he did not like the looks of him; but as the new man was undoubtedly a tall and well-built fellow, and the morals of the soldiery were not expected to be above reproach, and as his officer had brought him in, the worthy "noncom" saluted respectfully, and said to the Gypsy:

"Wait 'ere."

Then George went into the Tower, and forgot all about the new recruit, who was presently taken off by the corporal to the recruiting office, which was not far from the Tower, and duly taken into the service of the Government.

As he was being taken from the office to the Tower barracks—he had been assigned at his own request to Hoard's company—the new man who had given the name of "John Spring," in answer to the question, cast a glance up at the side of the great building, and laughed softly to himself, at which the corporal asked him:

"What beest laughin' at?"

The corporal was a rustic, who had not yet got over his country accent.

Spring laughed again.

"I be laughin' to myself," he said, mimicking. "Can't a man laugh in the army?"

"Not afore his *officers*," responded the corporal stiffly. "It ain't military. Shut thy 'ead, or that tongue of thine 'll git thee in trouble, my man."

The new recruit did not laugh again, but he smiled to himself all the way to the place where he was finally rigged out with a uniform.

The corporal, who was not above petty tyranny, did not fail to "take it out of him" as he would have expressed it, when he got him into the drill-room, to put him through his facings.

He was surprised to find, however, that the new man was unexpectedly ready with the facings and marchings, so that, after he had tried him with all sorts of orders, and found that he knew the meaning of all, the corporal suddenly observed:

"Thee'st been in the sarvice afore, man. I mistroost thee's a deserter."

The new recruit cast a glance at the other, as if he found it hard to restrain his risibility; but made no answer, and the corporal added:

"Coom wi' me, man. A'll find out who thee beest."

The recruit followed him to the guard-room, where the corporal reported to the officer that the new recruit acted to him like a deserter, and asked what he should do with him.

The officer of the guard that day was Oliver Howard, who, when the new recruit came into the room, eyed him sharply.

When the corporal reported, Howard looked at the new man with still more sharpness, and the other faced him, with the innocent air of one who had never known guile.

"Well, my man," said the young officer, "you hear what the corporal says. How is it? Are you a deserter, or not?"

Spring stared at the officer hard.

"Your honor ought to know," was all he said. "I know a thing or two. If your honor wants a new hand, that don't need to be drilled, seems to me it ain't much the sarvice is goin' to suffer."

Oliver seemed to be pleased with the reply, for he turned to the corporal, saying:

"We mustn't ask too many questions, corporal. If we get a good man, and he turns out to be good in his drill, it is not for us to pry too close into his affairs. Put him on guard, and we'll see whether he understands that, as well as the rest of the business."

So John Spring, the Gypsy, against all the rules of the service, happened to be put on guard, the very day on which he enlisted, and was placed at the door of the very Armory in which the trouble had taken place the night before, where he attracted attention from the country visitors who crowded the Tower during the day by his tall figure, and dark, handsome face, both set off by the new uniform which he wore.

That evening at the closing of the gates, the Constable of the Tower, who felt naturally nervous as the darkness approached, fearing a repetition of the scene of the previous night, came to the door of the armory, as the "Beef-Eaters" marshaled out the last of the crowd, and stared hard at the new man who was on guard.

John Spring stood at "attention," when he saw the Constable coming, and presented arms in the stiff way of an old soldier. The Constable eyed him from head to foot, and said to him:

"Umph! You're a new man, hey?"

"Yes, sir," was the perfectly respectful reply.

"When did you come into the guard?" asked the old general.

"This arternoon, sir."

"Umph! Who put you on here?"

"Sergeant, sir."

"Umph! How long have you been in the service?"

The new recruit seemed to be pondering a moment, and then answered, gravely:

"'Bout four hours and a 'arf, sir."

The old general colored slightly, for he thought the recruit was chaffing him, and he snapped out:

"How dare you answer me in that manner? How long have you been in the service, altogether?"

The recruit appeared to be thinking again, but he answered as before:

"Four hours and a 'arf, sir—leastwise it might be three-quarters, now."

Then the old general turned and stumped down to the guard-room, when he inquired angrily of the sergeant "How he dared to put a recruit on an important post like that?"

The sergeant laid the responsibility on the officer of the guard, and Oliver Howard was at once called for.

He came, looking as innocent as possible, and in answer to the query what he meant by putting a new man on such a post, answered:

"Because I wanted a man I could trust, sir. Last night all the old soldiers, as I am told, showed the white feather, and the new man looks as if he were a brave fellow."

"Then, understand, sir," said the general, sharply, "that he must come off at once. I will not trust a post like that to a recruit."

So John Spring was sent to the barracks for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUKE GETS A VISIT.

THE old duke, on the evening after his surly reception of his young kinsman, was in a worse humor than usual, and this was aggravated by the fact that his gouty foot began to pain him so severely that he had to send for the doctor, the same who was official surgeon of the Tower.

The doctor managed to relieve him of his pain and amuse his mind at the same time.

The first he did with some soothing applications, and the second he effected by telling him the story of the mysterious apparition, at the Armory, the evening before, at which the duke expressed incredulity, insisting that the men must have been all drunk, and that the whole thing was a fabrication.

When the doctor told him what he had himself seen, the old noble was staggered, but concluded that the physician must have also had a "drop too much," and with that he added:

"You know, doctor, that such things cannot be in the nineteenth century. They are impossible, you know."

"Nevertheless I can swear to what I saw," said Tatham stubbornly, "and if your grace does not choose to believe it, that makes no difference in the facts. I don't argue that it is a ghost, at all, but, on the contrary, I am convinced that the man who did the trick is a very skillful fellow."

"Ah, then, you admit that there is no ghost about the affair. Well, then, who can have done it? I'd like to see such a thing happen in my house. I don't believe that it could."

"I hope it never will, duke," said Tatham, rising to take his leave. "If your grace were to see the thing I saw last night, it would be a bad thing for the foot, and you too. Good-night."

And the doctor left the house, more than ever convinced that the duke was the most disagreeable old man he had ever met.

In the mean time, the old duke himself, after the departure of the physician, began to ponder over what had been told him; and, as the light faded away, and the darkness supervened, he began to grow nervous, in spite of his bold words.

He rung for candles, and the flunky brought them in, of whom the old noble asked whether he had heard anything of the trouble at the Tower of London, the night before.

The man was a big, stout fellow; but, as the duke asked the question, he grew perceptibly paler, and said in a nervous way:

"Please your grace, yes; but we all 'opes that the thing won't come this way, your grace. It'd scare the maids 'arf out of their wits, and there ain't none of us wants to 'ave the Old Scratch 'imself comin' 'round."

The old duke saw that the big fellow was really frightened, and he asked him, sneeringly:

"Why, Jarvis, you surely are not afraid of a man like yourself?"

"Please your grace," said Jarvis, respectfully but firmly, "if the thing were to come 'round 'ere in the night, I couldn't answer for the way hany of us would act. It ain't to be supposed that it will; but the maids is all scared 'arf to death a'ready, and they *do* say the thing 'as been 'round town for more than a month, your grace."

This was news to the duke, so he continued:

"Where and when, Jarvis?"

Jarvis lowered his voice, and looked around the big room, now dimly lighted with a pair of wax candles, as if he was afraid of being overheard, as he answered:

"They do say, your grace, that it was seen on 'Ampstead 'Eath and Windmill 'Ill, and 'Igh 'Olborn; and the folks in 'Ampstead Court is that scared that they dassn't go to bed at nights."

The duke mused for a few moments, and then said:

"Well, if he comes around here, I shall know what to do with him. Jarvis, I am going to take a turn in the garden. Get my chair ready, and bring me my pistols. I have a fancy that this wild scamp, whoever he is, may pay us a visit to-night, and if so, we will try what we can do with him."

Jarvis turned paler than before, and gasped:

"Your grace must be joking!"

The old duke favored him with one of his most stony glances, as he answered:

"I never joke with my servants, Jarvis. Go and get the chair ready, and bring the pistols, as I said."

Jarvis, who well knew the value of his place, made no more ado, but went and got the rolling-chair, in which the old noble was used to taking as much of the air as was possible to one of his age and habits.

He also brought a pair of handsome dueling-pistols, with which in the days of his youth the old duke had fought more than one combat, and acquired the reputation of being one of the best shots in England.

Then the obsequious flunky wheeled his master into the garden of the palace, which stretched down to the margin of the river Thames, one of those quaint, old-fashioned places, only possible to the very rich people in London, where land is sometimes worth from two to three guineas a foot.

The gardens of Norfolk House some acre and a half in extent, laid out in the formal style that came in with the reigns of William III., and "good Queen Anne," and terminated in a flight of stone steps, at the top of which there was a summer-house that overlooked the river, in which the duke was wont to sit in the summer evenings and muse sadly on the fact that he could never hope to be young again.

On this evening he had his chair wheeled to the old place, and told Jarvis that he could go, a permission of which the man gladly availed himself, for he was undeniably afraid in the dark, in common with many other good people in the city of London, since the pranks of Spring-Heeled Jack had begun to be played, in all directions, round the town.

The duke had heard of the strange appearances before, and had given them but little attention; for the chief exploits of this mysterious being had taken place in the outlying districts of the suburbs, and it was only the night before that he had, for the first time, made his appearance in the midst of civilization, spite of the guards of the Tower itself.

But the old duke, who was as brave as a lion, and relied on his shooting powers to save him from harm if the monster should make its appearance, sat quietly in the summer-house for some time; heard the clock of the Tower strike ten and eleven; and still nothing appeared to disturb his quiet; though the last waterman on the river had, long ere that, rowed past, and the silence of night was over everything on land and water.

He had told Jarvis to call him at eleven, and, soon after the strokes of the clock had died away on the night, heard the step of that worthy servitor approaching, to whom he called out:

"Well, Jarvis, all safe and sound, so far."

There was no answer, but the step came on, and the duke turned his head to see who was coming toward him.

It was a tall personage, about the size of the flunky who usually attended him, but wrapped in a long cloak, and the old noble, with an instinctive fear that all was not right, snatched up his pistols, and called out to the approaching man:

"Halt, there, I tell you! You can't frighten me with your tricks, sir."

And so saying, he leveled a pistol at the personage in the cloak, and cocked both weapons.

The click of the hammer was plainly audible in the stillness of the night, and the duke heard more steps approaching from the back of the garden, in which he recognized the heavy foot-fall of the worthy Jarvis:

"Help! help!" he shouted; for the visitor was still advancing, and the old man found that he could not see the sights of the pistol in the night and would have to aim by guess-work.

Taking as good aim as he could, he fired, and the result astonished him.

The stranger in the long cloak suddenly threw off the enveloping mantle, and displayed the figure of Spring-Heel Jack, clad in half-armor, from the waist up, but with a huntsman's breeches and boots on his lower limbs, that had a most queer and incongruous effect; while, instead of spurs on his heels, he had two great

hooks, that appeared to be powerful springs. He made a jump up in the air, came down on the hooks, and threw a complete somerset; then made for the duke.

With lofty leaps he came toward the old man, who hastily leveled the remaining pistol, and fired with a trembling hand, shouting for help as he did so.

The stranger uttered no sound, but made a second leap in the air, and came down by the chair, when he darted on the old man, and the duke saw that the hands of the figure were armed with the same long claws of which all the people who had hitherto seen the monster had spoken.

In a moment it had clutched the helpless old nobleman by the shoulders, and though the duke, in the energy of his terror, struggled with a force that surprised himself, the monster dragged him out of the chair as if he had been a baby, and thence to the border of the river, where it caught him up and held him over the tide, as if about to throw him in.

The old duke struggled and shouted, in a voice that was growing weaker all the time, and the steps of men running were audible in the garden, while Jarvis was heard shouting to the rest of the servants to "hurry, for the duke was being killed."

Then the monster seemed to realize it might be dangerous to stay where it was any longer, and threw the old duke down on the ground, by the side of the river, first inflicting a scratch on his face and down the side of his neck, that looked like stab of a knife.

When the horrified Jarvis and his fellow-servants came upon the scene, they found the old duke on the ground, but the monster had disappeared, and no one knew what had become of it.

CHAPTER IX. THE GYPSY CAMP.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, to-day, would seem to be a place where mystery has but little chance to lurk, but fifty years ago the case was different.

Even to-day, when the flood of buildings has swept far outside of the original limits of the old city of London, and has made a wilderness of bricks and mortar that takes a full day's journey to traverse it from one end to the other, go as straight as a man can, the Heath has been left open for the delectation of the people who ride donkeys and disport themselves on Sundays and holidays.

The morning after the mysterious assault on the duke of Norfolk, in his own garden, the city was all agog with the news that Spring-Heel Jack had been at his pranks again, and the policemen were scouring the town in search of information that might lead to the apprehension of the person or persons who had contrived to outrage the dignity of the premier peer of the House of Lords.

Such a thing had never been heard of before, and the indignation of the people was proportionate to the enormity of the offense.

The naturally flunkyish nature of the average British shopkeeper was roused to the bottom of its soul; for who knew whether the atrocious villain, that had assaulted the first nobleman of England, might not, if he were not discovered, lay his impious hands on royalty itself?

And, let foreigners dream as they will of the possible republicanism of the average English citizen, he has a wholesome reverence for the name and state of royalty and nobility, in the hope that he himself may, some day, attain to a small measure of the same dignity.

Out on Hampstead Heath, the monster, it was said, had made his first appearance, and there he had frightened women and children by the score, so to speak, though the number of his victims had really not yet reached a round dozen.

It was on Hampstead Heath, the day after the news spread that the Duke of Norfolk had been attacked by Spring-Heel Jack, that a small camp of Gypsies, composed of two men and three women, with several children, had been pitched in a remote part.

A donkey cart had been unloaded, and a little barrel-shaped tent erected, in the ordinary Gypsy fashion, with a fire burning in the open air, over which swung a pot on its tripod, while an old woman, with gray hair and the elfish face of a witch, stirred the contents. In the eyes of the visitors that strayed that way these probably consisted of all sorts of magic ingredients, but were really the remains of chickens and a young pig, which were missing, that morning, from the cottages of the people who resided in the neighborhood.

As she was stirring away, one of the men came and stood beside her, asking:

"Well, Mother Spring, when will the pot be ready?"

Mother Spring saluted him with a scowl.

"When I tell 'ee, and not afore, Jasper Winterbotham. Thou hast always a stomach for food, but no hands to get the dinner with."

"Don't be crusty, mother," said the young Gypsy, not ill-naturedly. "I only asked because there is a *gorgio** coming to trade horses,

and Jack didn't get back last night. So I'll have to do the trading myself."

Mother Spring sneered.

"Fine trade thou'll make of it. Why, lad, when Mathias was thy age he could take an old horse that had been at the plow all its life, and make a *gorgio* think it a colt. But thou canst ne'er do that."

Then she looked back to the tent by which the other man was standing, and called out, in her shrill tones, cracked with age:

"Hey, Mathias, thou lazy hound, I want more wood, or the pot 'll ne'er be done."

The person addressed was an old man, with hair as gray as her own.

His figure was bent, but had the remnants of great strength and activity. His shoulders were broad, his limbs long, and the decrepitude of age could not hide the trim outline of what had once been the figure of an Apollo. His face was still handsome, in spite of the ragged gray beard, that seemed to have been left unkempt on purpose to make it as unattractive as possible. He was clad in rags, and his black eyes glowed with anger, as he called back to the old woman:

"Get thine own sticks, Ghita; for if I come over there, I'll give thee what I get, in a way thou wouldn't like."

The old woman favored him with a malevolent glance, but she had experienced castigation too often to openly rebel, and she set to work to gather sticks from the ground near her, where they had been lying all the time, she being too lazy to pick them up.

Mathias, in the mean time, watched her, and when he saw that she was really at work, he came up to the fire and helped, in a way that showed his "bark to be worse than his bite," as the saying runs; for he helped his wife materially with her labors.

She did not give him any thanks for it, but returned to the stirring of the pot, as the old man ranged the sticks under the flame, till he asked, in a pause of his labor:

"Where did Jack go?"

The old woman waved her hand toward the distant smoke of the city.

"Over yonner, ye may know. Jack'll never be easy till the lobsters* gets 'im again, and gives him what they gave many a *gorgio* before him. The boy's allers venturesome, Mathias, and thou know'st that as well as I do. By the time 'e's been gone, I mistroost we'll not see 'im again in a 'urry."

Old Mathias made no answer, for it seemed as if the words of his spouse roused gloomy thoughts in his own breast, but he stood gazing into the fire, as if thinking of something, till both were startled by the voice of Jasper Winterbotham calling out to them:

"'Ere cooms Jack now; and if 'e ain't gone and took the bounty!"

And presently over the heath, among the gorse-bushes, they both spied the tall figure of a soldier in his smart undress-suit, the flat cap on his head setting off his handsome face, and recognized in him the straying son, who had gone from the camp, two days before, into London, on an expedition for begging, thieving, or whatever could be done for the profit of the band.

Jack Spring came up, looking handsome and as well as ever, and his first words to his mother were, as he smelt the savory emanation from the pot on the fire:

"'Elloa, mother, I'm as 'ungry as a wolf this mornin'. Give us somethin' out of the pot, in a 'urry, and be 'anged to thee."

The old woman did not seem to be offended by the rude salutation, for she actually smiled as she looked at him, and rose with alacrity to obey his request, while the other Gypsies gathered round his handsome figure, as if they all admired him, strongest and bravest of their band, beyond dispute.

The old man called Mathias was the only one that did not seem to be pleased, for he made no motion to welcome the new-comer, and when the rest had spoken to Jack, observed dryly:

"And so thou'rt a lobster again."

Jack grinned.

"Ay, ay, as much as I choose; no more, feyther. I know what to do, and when to do it, as well as the next man. I took a fancy to soger again for a while; but when I want to get out, I can do it as well as the next. And where dost think I was last night? Why, in the Tower, of all places in the world. And, feyther, there's a 'eap of fun a-goin', for the Romany, and they want to take it. Who dost think went to the Tower t'other night, and raised sich a rumpus the guard 'ad to turn out to ketch him. Why, Spring-'Eel Jack, to be sure. Hey! what fools those *gorgios* are!"

And the tall Gypsy threw back his shoulders and roared with laughter, while the other members of the band seemed to be amused at what he had said.

"And 'ow coomst thou 'ere to-day?" asked Mathias, when he had allowed a grim smile to fade from his face. "Do they let recruits go out as free as all that?"

* "Lobsters" is the cant word for soldiers in England, from their red coats.

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"And that's for the sergeant to find out. I just took my cap and went out of the door, when the rest were looking another way, and when the roll comes to be called, there won't be none to hanswer the name of John Spring and they must whistle for 'im."

The face of the elder Gypsy grew graver at once, as he asked:

"And dost mean thou'rt goin' to desert, and thee only two days in the sarvice? Lad, it win not do. I was a soger once, myself, and I tell 'ee it winnot do. Thou mun go back to the barracks, and be quick about it."

Jack did not seem to be much troubled, for he continued his meal, which he had taken from the pot as soon as he came, with perfect tranquillity.

"Ay, ay, feyther," he said. "I'll not get to the triangles, but an I tell 'ee 'oo 'tweere that listed me, thou'll be s'prised."

"'Oo was it, lad?" asked Mathias.

"'Oo but the *gorgio* heir, feyther—and—say—'e's a better man than I gave 'im credit for; and 'e can 'andle 'is 'ands like a good 'un; so 'e can, now. Noll's wrang about him, and so 'e'll find out some day, when 'tis too late. Tell 'ee the man can fight. Gave me a smack o' the' chops, laid me flat, and I ain't no fool, nuther, as thou knows, feyther."

The old man favored his son with a malignant glance as he said:

"So much the worse for 'im, then."

CHAPTER X. THE RECRUIT.

GEORGE HOWARD had gone on drill as usual, on the same morning when Spring visited his family, and being in command of his company, in the absence of his captain, he received the report of his sergeant that the Gypsy recruit had taken his departure without leave, though the sergeant did not think he had exactly deserted.

The young officer was angry at hearing the report, and gave orders that, as soon as the Gypsy returned, he should be put into the guard-room and punished.

Having given the order, he forgot the matter, till it was brought back to his memory, in the evening, by the same sergeant, reporting that the recruit had come back, and had resisted arrest, so that they had to knock him down with the butt-end of a musket, and that he was in irons in the guard-room, where he had sent for his commanding officer, and asked if he would not come and speak to him.

George hesitated about going; but finally, as he was naturally kind-hearted, went to the place where the prisoners were confined, and found Jack Spring lying in the dark cell, his head tied up in a bloody bandage, his hands and feet ironed heavily, while his uniform was torn and spotted with blood.

As soon as he saw the young officer, he began:

"Well, your honor, this ain't the way to treat a soger, is it? I didn't list for no sich treatment."

"It's what you deserve for absence without leave," said Howard, sternly; for he saw that the man was drunk still, and insolent in demeanor. "I told you that the sergeant would bring you to your bearings, if you tried any of your tricks on him. What did you want to see me for?"

The Gypsy stared up at him, with a curious glance, half-cunning, half-stupid.

"I wanted to see if your honor wouldn't let me off punishment, this time; if I promised to do well for the future. Your honor recruited me, and it won't do your honor no credit, if your man goes to the triangles, the first day after 'e joins."

Howard frowned.

"You're a worthless, impudent dog; and if you get a good dose of the cat, in the morning, it will teach you to keep your insolent tongue to yourself," he said. "I shall not interfere with your punishment."

He was turning away from him, when the Gypsy called out earnestly:

"Your honor will be sorry, if I don't get off from the triangles. Mark'ee that, now, dom thy buttons."

Howard paid no further attention to him, but went off and paid a visit to the Constable of the Tower in his quarters.

General Reid had always been glad to see him, and especially when the young officer would play him a game of chess; for Reid, like most old Indian officers, was passionately fond of the game, in which the native Hindoos are so expert.

George had never been much of a player till he entered the Tower, and saw Rose Reid; from which date he had developed a great love for the game, and a corresponding attachment for the society of an old officer, whom, when he first saw him, he had thought one of the stiffest old martinetes he had ever met.

Since the general had spoken to him so decidedly on the subject of his daughter, the young man had not dared to think of going to see her, in disobedience to orders; but when the general actually asked him "why he did not

* A stranger, not of Gypsy blood.

come in to have a game of chess in the evening," Howard, with all the eagerness of a lover to catch at straws in his favor, accepted the tacit invitation and came there in the evening, hoping, after what was really a penitential game with the father, to get a glimpse of the daughter.

In this he was not disappointed; for the first person he saw, when he entered the room of the commandant, that evening, was the face of Rose, looking pale, as if she had not been well, but with a slight, happy smile on it, that told him a good deal.

The old general was remarkably cordial in his manner, and treated him as if nothing had happened to disturb their relations; but he insisted on tying him down closely to his game.

George did not dare to let his attention wander; for the general was testy, and detected any signs of want of skill, as well as attention.

Finally the young officer got interested, in spite of himself, in one game, wherein he got the best of the general, who was a very superior player as a rule, and actually forgot all about the presence of the young lady, who was seated by the table, with her fancy work, till he was able to say the important words "check-mate" to the discomfiture of the old general, who said, as he pushed away the table:

"Mr. Howard, you have improved wonderfully, since you came to the Tower. In a little while, if you will only pay attention to the position of *all* your pieces, you might venture to play with a stranger in India; and that, I can assure you, is not what every man can do. Rose, my love, suppose you give us some tea."

George, much relieved at the close of the game, for the strain on his mind to beat the wary old general was by no means light, had his first opportunity, that evening, to take a good look at Rose, as she rung the bell for the servant.

He thought she looked as if she had suffered from the terror of the night when such a singular accident had happened to her, and he had a strong desire to ask about it, but did not dare. It was the young lady herself who relieved him, presently, by saying:

"Have you heard anything about that monster they call Spring-Heel Jack, Mr. Howard?"

The old general started slightly, and said, in a nervous way:

"Now, Rose, don't you remember that Dr. Tatham positively interdicted any mention of that?"

"I know it, sir," she answered; "but the doctor does not know everything, and he cannot tell how I am tormented with curiosity. If I could only learn something about it, and not be compelled to nurse my own fancies, I should be less frightened than I am."

"But Howard doesn't know anything about it," the general interrupted her, in the same nervous way. "If he did, he would tell me, and he hasn't."

George looked at the young lady, and then at her father, and, seeing that the old man did not forbid him to speak, said:

"There is no news, Miss Reid, save what you have probably heard already."

"And what is that?" she asked, with vivacity.

"Papa did not tell me anything."

The old general shrugged his shoulders, in answer to the inquiring look of George.

"Tell her all about it," he said. "Tatham says that anything is better than letting her brood over the matter."

"There is only this to say," said George; "that the man who is doing all this, attacked the Duke of Norfolk, in his own garden, last night. The police are after it, and I hope they will find out something; for the whole affair is a disgrace to them. To think that one man can defy the whole of London in this way and make his escape so often! it is a shame."

The young lady shuddered.

"But are you sure that it is a man?" she asked in a low voice. "To me it seemed more like a wild beast of some kind. No, father, you cannot silence me. I must talk about it. You don't know anything about what happened to me on that night, when you found me in the Armory."

"I don't want to know," said her father hastily. "That is—Tatham gave strict orders that you were not to excite yourself; and the story is sure to excite you. Please try not to think of it at all."

"But I must think of it," she retorted sharply. "I cannot get it out of my mind; and it is better to speak out and share it with you, than to keep it to myself, and go mad, thinking it may come again."

"That it shall never do," said George Howard earnestly. "I will give my life to defend you from any such visitation."

She looked at him gravely.

"I think you would, and so would my father; but what are we to do, suppose that he were to come to me, when you were neither of you near me?"

"Then you must not go away from us," the old general interposed anxiously. "Promise me, Rose, that you will never go where you cannot summon help, as soon as you see anything strange."

"I will do that," she said, with a slight shudder. "There is no fear that I shall be venture-some, after what I saw. Oh, it was fearful! I was alone in the Armory, and the lamp was swinging from the ceiling, when *the thing* suddenly made a spring from the back of the charger, and came bounding toward me, like a great ape. It seemed as if I could not stir, as it came, and it cast its hairy arms round me, and then I must have fainted. I remember trying to scream, and the sound seemed to be smothered in my throat; and after that I saw nothing, till you were all round me, and I was in my own room."

Howard listened attentively.

The figure seen by Rose was evidently not the same he had seen himself; for she spoke of it as "a great ape."

The girl, for a few moments, was so much overcome by the recollection of the horrible sight she had seen, that she trembled violently; but, after a little, she recovered her calmness, and asked Howard:

"Was that the way it appeared to you?"

He was about to answer, when they were interrupted by the arrival of Chundoo, who came in, bearing the tea-tray, and set it down by them, his black eyes rolling from one to the other, in a way that attracted his master's attention, for he asked:

"What is the matter, Chundoo? Has anything frightened you?"

Chundoo tried to salaam in his usual manner, but the rolling of his eyes increased, and his teeth chattered as he glanced at his young mistress and answered:

"Noting, sahib, noting, nothing."

George Howard saw that something *had* happened, and connected it, in a moment, with Rose and the reappearance of the monster. He saw that Chundoo was making great efforts to keep down his terror, on account of the young lady, and he had much respect for the self-control of the Hindoo, who was naturally very timid.

He made a signal to General Reid, which the old gentleman understood and asked no further questions; the more so as he saw that his daughter had caught sight of Chundoo's face, and was beginning to tremble again.

Howard tried his best to turn the conversation on other things by referring to the game which he and the general had been playing, and making a comment on the last move, which had given him the victory over the well-laid scheme of his veteran adversary.

The ruse succeeded, as far as the general was concerned; for he was ready, at all times, to talk chess with any one, and Howard managed to get Rose into the conversation, by appealing to her on a point in dispute between them.

Chundoo had time to get out of the room, and so take out of the range of her observation his visible terror. Then she poured out the tea, and the conversation grew animated, till the time came for the young man to take his departure.

When he rose to go, the old general had forgotten all about Chundoo's queer behavior; and the young officer was not in the corridor, and the door of the Constable's apartments closed, before he saw Chundoo again.

Then the Hindoo came toward him, with every mark of terror on his brown face, from where he had been hiding in a corner of the corridor, and whispered to him:

"Oh, sahib, *debbil come again!*"

CHAPTER XI.

THE THIRD VISIT.

"Where did you see it?" asked Howard.

Chundoo pointed to the end of the corridor, on which George knew that the room of Miss Reid opened.

"Suryia see it, sahib," he whispered. "Come in—frighten her to death."

"Come with me," said the young officer, quietly. "We will see what has happened. Is Suryia able to speak?"

Chundoo nodded vehemently.

"Yes, sahib. Me fight for Missy Rose. Me drive him away."

George followed him to the place where he had indicated, and found the ayah, crouching in a corner of her mistress's room, quaking with fear, but able to give him some account of what had happened.

It seemed that she was chatting with Chundoo, when they heard a noise at the door and went to open it, when they had been confronted by a man in the dress of an officer, with a long military cloak over his uniform.

Supposing it to be the officer of the guard, who wished to ask some question of the commandant, and who had got to the wrong place, Suryia began to speak to him, telling him where to go, when he had suddenly caught her round the neck, and breathed a flame of fire in her face, at which she was so much frightened that she gave a scream and dropped on the floor.

Then Chundoo, rendered desperate at the appearance of the stranger, and thinking him to be the devil that had frightened them all so much, yet had the courage to catch up a sword sharp as a razor which hung on the wall, with which he rushed at the stranger, who fled at

once down the corridor and vanished in a dark place beyond the stairs to the Armory.

There was no sentry in that direction, and the Hindoo was too much relieved at the departure of the unwelcome guest to dare to chase it any further than to get rid of it.

At that very moment they had heard the bell ring for tea, and Suryia had implored Chundoo not to let Miss Rose know what had happened.

That was all the story they had to tell, and it left George in a state of perplexity that rendered him uncertain what to do.

The officer of the guard that night was an old comrade of his in the regiment, named Stanley, and his first thought was that Stanley ought to know the facts and make a thorough search in the building, in which he felt confident that the person who had played them so many tricks must still be concealed.

He did not dare to tell General Reid yet, for fear that it might get to the ears of his daughter, and drive her into a fresh fit of terror.

Hastily telling the two frightened Hindoos not to say anything about what had happened, but to keep the door locked, Howard went down to the guard-room which he found quiet.

The men not on guard were sleeping on their benches in the guard-room, and Stanley had gone to his own room to lie down, the duty in the Tower not being arduous, at any time.

The sentry at the door told him where to find Stanley, and he went in and awakened the officer, who at first was inclined to resent being disturbed by one not on duty for the night.

As soon as he heard that "Spring-Heel Jack," as the monster was generally called, had made his appearance again, in the very midst of the Tower, he was ready enough to make a search, and the first thing they did was to call out the guard and bring up the prisoners to be looked at.

These were found all right; and the Gypsy, who had been locked up, was fast asleep. When he was wakened and ordered to stand up, he growled a good deal, but obeyed, and stood, swaying to and fro, in a way that showed he had not yet recovered from the spree, on which he had been all day.

The prisoners inspected, the two officers—for George accompanied Stanley in the search—proceeded to make a tour round all the places in the huge building, in which it was possible for a man to be secreted.

Especially, they went down the narrow passage, at the end of which, Chundoo insisted, the thing he saw had disappeared.

The corridor was long, and extended from one end of the building to the other, and they knew that at the other end away from the Constable's apartments, was a door, which opened on the moat, and was kept locked at all times.

Nevertheless this door was found unlocked, and they came to the conclusion that the person who had been playing ghost, that night, had gone out of that door.

This made it pretty certain that he must be an intimate of the Tower itself; but how he had got out still remained a mystery.

Howard had told the man to bring lanterns, and he held one out over the glittering waters of the moat, which spread some twenty feet below the little postern door.

The moat was too broad to be leaped by any human being; for it stretched twenty-five feet from bank to bank, but it seemed that the person who had left by the door must have crossed it in some way, for there was no sign of him to be seen.

On the other side of the moat was a flat, paved space, extending to the Tower stairs, and Stanley whispered:

"By Jove, Howard, the fellow must have gone that way or none. If he hasn't, he is still in the building."

The words were hardly uttered, when they heard a violent shriek behind them, and the whole party started and turned round, to go back to the place whence the shriek proceeded.

Howard was full of fear, for he had recognized the voice of Rose.

He drew his sword and ran back as fast as he could to the rooms of the old Constable, when he was met, in the corridor, by the very figure that had terrified them all so much, when they encountered it in the Armory.

It came leaping and running swiftly along the passage, silent as ever, and Howard met it fairly, and made a thrust at it, which would have killed any man in the world, had the thrust taken effect.

He was so excited, however, that he missed his aim, the figure dodging to one side with a dexterity that was wonderful, and the next moment it was in the midst of the soldiers, leaping in the air over the heads of some, and running at others, whom it knocked down in its passage.

The men were not so full of superstitious fear as they had been before; but they were clumsy and confused by the sudden apparition, and the strange being actually got through the midst of them all, and started for the postern door, pursued by the whole crowd.

It ran with remarkable swiftness, and outstripped them all on its way to the postern

The door had been left wide open, and they saw the strange thing take a flying leap in the air, turning a somerset in the operation, and clearing the broad moat as if it had been a gutter in the street.

The next minute it was flying away over the broad-paved space toward the river, and they had the pleasure of hearing a wild yell, as it plunged in the Thames, followed by a shower of bullets, which they fired when it was just too late to hit anything.

CHAPTER XII.

"YOGA."

THE excitement in the Tower after this, the second visit of Spring-Heel Jack, was higher than ever.

When the soldiers got back from their fruitless chase, after carefully barring the postern, so that no person could possibly get in that way, they found the doors of the Constable's apartments wide open, and everything in confusion.

The general was tearing his hair, as he regarded the insensible figure of his daughter, and as Howard came in he said wildly:

"It is infamous, this persecution! She will die, and that wretch will be her murderer. Howard, this cannot go on. She must be taken away from here, or the shock will kill her. Where is Tatham? He ought to be here. Send for him at once. She shall not stay in this accursed building another night, if I can help it."

Howard sent off a soldier after the doctor, and, while he was waiting, asked what had happened.

The story was short and simple.

Rose had gone into her own room and found Surya there, from whom she had ascertained, on questioning her, a little of what had happened.

The ayah had tried to keep her secret, but her mistress had seen her pale face and air of terror, and had not rested till she had got it out of her.

The effect of the news on Rose had been to send her into a spasm of terror, and she had rushed out into the passage, with a wild impulse to call for Howard, whom she thought, in her frenzy of fear, to be on guard that night.

No sooner had she got into the passage than the monster had made his appearance out of a niche right behind her, and had clutched her in a way that had drawn from her the shriek they had all heard.

The old general had been by his daughter and had made a pass at the thing with his sword, when the other had grabbed at the blade, in the same way he had done in the Armory.

This time, however, the old soldier had been too quick for the monster, and had escaped the grip of the other, dealing it a blow with the edge of the blade that struck it on the head and must have inflicted a wound, for it turned and fled just as the soldiers came running to the sound of the shriek.

The rest they all knew; but the effect on the Constable's daughter had been to throw her into a state of insensibility, and to frighten her father, on her account, to that extent that he hardly knew what he was doing.

That he was determined to take her away from the Tower, that very night, was the only clear idea in his head, and this he prepared to do at once, while she had not yet recovered her senses. Dr. Tatham arrived, while they were still full of the excitement, and he rather surprised Howard by agreeing with General Reid, that it was best to take Rose away, before she recovered her senses, so that she might wake up in a place where she would not be reminded of the past, in any way.

He had seen so much of her weak health and impressible nature, on the first occasion when she was frightened, that he feared that, if she waked up in the Tower, the remembrance would come over her at once, and perhaps affect her mind permanently.

Luckily there were willing hands in plenty to do anything the commandant ordered and Rose was taken up and put into a litter from the hospital, in which she was carried off from the Tower into the open air, and thence to the house of an old friend of the general's, named Sir John Savage, who lived not far from the Tower, in a large house, where he and the general often played chess together, for Sir John was as enthusiastic in his way as Reid, in the noble game of chess.

They had got her into the house, and she had not yet given any symptoms of recovering her senses, till the doctor set himself to work, and, by the usual means, managed to bring her back to life.

They had arranged that she should be laid on a sofa, in the large drawing-room of Sir John's house, and Lady Savage was by her side, when she opened her eyes.

The doctor warned them that it would never do to admit, before her, that she had been again attacked by the monster; so, when she started awake, with a look of fear, Lady Savage at once began:

"Why, my dear, what was the matter with

you, to go and fall asleep in the way you have? Did you have a headache? Never mind now. Your father agrees with me that the best rule for you, till you get back your old rosy cheeks, is, early to bed and early to rise."

Rose seemed bewildered.

"Where am I?" she asked. "I thought I was in the Tower, and that the—"

Here she stopped, and shuddered violently.

The memory of the hideous visitor, who had now twice affrighted her, came back; and the doctor, with a warning glance at Lady Savage, broke in glibly:

"My dear child, you must be getting out of your head. Don't you remember that we were all playing whist, when you dropped off in a faint? I suppose you haven't recovered from that fright you had. But we will make it all right, thanks to Lady Savage's kindness. If your ladyship will be kind enough to call the maids, we will see the young lady taken care of."

The quick-witted Lady Savage took the hint; and Rose, who seemed to be dazed at the way they spoke, passed her hand across her forehead.

"It is very strange," she murmured. "I don't remember— Was not Mr. Howard here, or—"

Then she stopped; and Dr. Tatham answered, as glibly as before:

"Mr. Howard? That shows you must have been ill, my dear child. Mr. Howard is not here. It is nearly ten o'clock, and time for invalids to be in bed."

"And you are sure that I did not see the—thing?" she asked, trembling.

The doctor laughed.

"The thing? What thing can you have seen? I am sure there was nothing here to frighten any one, unless it was Sir John's snoring after dinner. You must have been asleep and dreaming. Now, I insist that you don't talk any more."

And he carried his point, and had Rose taken off to bed, with Lady Savage and her maid to attend on her; for the baronet's wife had been informed of the whole affair, and was willing to do anything for the Reids to save the poor child from the terror of Spring-Heel Jack, of whom she had heard in common with all London.

When the girl had been taken up-stairs, and the gentlemen were left alone in the drawing-room, Sir John said gravely:

"Reid, the trouble about all this is that the scoundrel who is doing these pranks is a man who knows the places to strike every time he comes."

"What makes you think so?" asked the general, in a dreary tone of voice. "I think he must be the devil himself, who has a special spite against me for something I have done. Why should he single out my daughter, of all the people in London, to frighten? What has the poor child done to hurt any one? I am ready to have the scoundrel hanged or burned alive, if we could only catch him; but he seems to be unfindable."

Sir John, who had had a great deal of experience in India, where he had held many high commands, drew his friend aside to say, out of the doctor's hearing:

"Reid, there is something in all this we don't understand; but I think there is *yoga* in it."

General Reid started and stared at his friend.

He had been long enough in India to know the meaning of the word "*yoga*," which is used by the Hindoo devotees to describe a mysterious power possessed by the fakirs, that has puzzled European scientific men, who cannot account for the phenomena they behold, but are compelled to admit their genuineness.

The fakirs, under the influence of the "*yoga*," have allowed themselves to be buried alive for months, the grave being put under the guard of English sentries, and when they have been exhumed at the expiration of the time for which they had agreed to be buried, they have been found alive, and restored to full health.

They perform all sorts of singular tricks, quite beyond the reach of the cleverest European conjurers, and do their tricks in the open air, almost entirely naked, with no robes to hide their movements, and no false light to confuse the spectators.

The modern revelations of mesmerism and spiritualism have many of the same peculiarities, but they have not yet been brought to the same perfection that is shown by the rudest of the Hindoo conjurers; and General Reid, as soon as his friend spoke of "*yoga*," seemed to get a new light on the subject, for he said, in a low tone:

"I shouldn't wonder a bit, Savage. But is there any one in London who is able to do the thing?"

Sir John nodded.

"That is just what I don't want Tatham to hear. He doesn't believe in such things, and would only laugh at us about it. There is such a man, and his name is Ram Mandana. Did you never hear of him?"

"In India I did. Who has not? But how do you know he is here?"

Sir John lowered his voice.

"I have seen him on the streets, and that

within a week. If any one can get to the bottom of the affair, he is the man, if he be not actually in the secret."

Reid nodded his head, as if the idea pleased him, and answered:

"If you will go with me, we will go and see him to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIII.

RAM MANDANA.

IN a little back street of London, not far from the river, in a low and squalid quarter of the city, where sailors and watermen congregated, and fish-women scolded from their doors at each other, stood a small house, not distinguished from its neighbors by anything in the way of external architecture, though it had an air of silence about it, caused by the fact that the shutters of the windows were closed, day and night.

That the house was uninhabited, would have been the inference of a stranger; but the inhabitants of the quarter knew better, for they had seen a light burning at an upper window at night, and the inmate come forth in the early morning, before people were stirring.

They knew also that he was a "*furriner*," as they called him; but of what nationality few were competent to judge, save the sailors who had been to the Indies, who told the rest that he was a "*nigger*."

Yet he was as white as the people in the quarter, most of them being sunburned sailors of all nations.

When he was seen abroad in the daytime, which was very seldom, he wore a long robe, like that of a Roman priest, the color being dark brown, and on his head a turban of white, of the broad, flat shape which prevails in India.

He spoke little unless he was addressed, but he always treated everybody with perfect politeness, and he spoke excellent English.

How he lived no one knew, for he was never seen at any of the shops in the quarter in which he lived, and purchased no food, to any one's knowledge. No one knew his name, and no one was ever seen to enter his house, though there were those who said that he had visitors at night, when everybody else was asleep.

Therefore it was quite an excitement to the street, when two gentlemen were seen to knock at the door of the little house, the day after Spring-Heel Jack's third visit to London.

The visitors were "*gentlemen*," as the word was then understood—that is to say, persons of rank and position, indicated by their dress.

They were both old men, and, though they came on foot, the rude sailors and fish-wives of the street did not offer to treat them with rudeness, from spying certain persons whom they knew to be "*Bow street runners*," hanging about in sight of the two strangers, as if to take care of them, if there was any threatening demonstration of hostility against them.

This was by no means a matter of impossibility; for the street in which the two gentlemen had come to visit was full of bad characters, as well as sailors; and had the reputation of harboring more than one professional thief.

But the two strangers went to the door and knocked, when, after a short interval, it was opened to them by a person the people in the street had never seen before, and in whom they recognized a real "*nigger*," quite dark in color, but dressed in white, from head to foot.

There was a short talk between him and the strangers at the door, and the nearest of the curious loungers said that they spoke in "*some outlandish tongue*," that no Christian ought to know. Then the door was shut, and the strangers disappeared into the house, while the gaping gazers had to console themselves for the disappointment of their curiosity by staring hard at the outside of the dwelling, as if the bricks and mortar could tell them what was going on inside its precincts.

Meantime the two gentlemen, who were General Reid and Sir John Savage, were ushered by the dark man, who was only a common Hindoo servant, through a narrow and dark passage, up a rickety flight of stairs, to an upper chamber, which was provided with a skylight in the roof.

It was a large room for the size of the house, but totally devoid of windows.

At one side was a door, covered with a curtain; and the walls were hung with Eastern tapestry, of the graceful but meaningless patterns and general blending of harmonious colors that has been a characteristic of Oriental woven-work, for many centuries.

Here their guide told them, in Hindoostanee, to "*wait and the master would come to see them, in a little while*." Then he salaamed low, and disappeared, while Sir John said to his companion:

"The Ram doesn't live very luxuriously, Reid. I should say that a little soap and water would be a good investment for him on the house in general. It doesn't smell any too sweet."

They had noticed, in coming up the stairs, a strong odor that reminded them of the land they had both lived in for so many years, where

the home of cholera is found and where the dogs and vultures are the only scavengers.

But the room in which they were, was clean, as far as they could see.

A heavy rug covered the floor, all but about two feet at the edge; and a low square erection, in the center of the room, covered with tapestry and cushions, was the only sign of accommodation for visitors in the way of seats—the Persian "musnud."

Sir John at once took his seat on this, and beckoned to Reid to follow his example.

The general appeared to hesitate, and the old baronet said sharply:

"Take a seat, man. It never does to let these niggers see you are polite to them. Treat 'em as we used to do in India, and we'll have no trouble."

Reid took the seat to which he was beckoned, and whispered to Savage:

"But we're not in India now; and he may refuse to help us at all."

Sir John shook his head:

"I've been in the civil service, and I know better how to deal with niggers than you. You let me do the talking."

Then, without their hearing any footstep to warn them who was coming, they were addressed by a voice right behind their backs, as they sat on the musnud, and turning, with a simultaneous start, beheld a tall, grave-looking man, in a robe of dark crimson brocade, a white turban on his head, looking gravely at them, as he said:

"Peace be unto you. Why have you sought me?"

He spoke in excellent English, but with a certain foreign accent that betrayed he was not speaking his native tongue, and old Savage answered him, in Hindoostanee:

"We are sahibs, who have heard of the great wisdom of Ram Mandana, and we have come to ask him to help us. We are willing to pay well for the help, if it come in time."

The Hindoo bowed gravely. He was a remarkable-looking man, with a pale, olive-tinted face, of great beauty of outline, the peculiar, keen, stealthy air of the high-caste Hindoo, marking it, as different from the broader, bluffer, English faces of his visitors.

"I am ready to help the needy at all times," he said softly; "but not for money. Ram Mandana has no need of money, for he has conquered the flesh, and all that appertains to it."

Sir John allowed his lip to curl slightly.

"Yes, we know all about that. The fakirs do the same, but we know that they will take money, if it be offered. If you do work for us, we expect to pay for it."

The Hindoo shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply, as if he did not care to discuss the matter any further.

"We have come to you to ask you for information on a subject that—"

It was General Reid who spoke, but his friend interrupted him.

"Now, Reid, let me do the talking."

Then, turning to Ram Mandana, he continued:

"There is a man who is going about London, frightening all the timid women he can meet, and we want to find who he is. You are, we know, powerful in the *yoga*, and the person who is doing all this is known to you. If not, you can find him for us. If you will, we will pay you a thousand rupees; and, if that is not enough, say what will be. There, now, what do you say to that for an offer?"

The Hindoo shrugged his shoulders again.

"It is a good offer for one that needs money; but, as I told you, I have conquered the flesh, and I eat nothing. All I need is shelter from the cold of your detestable climate, and that is secured to me in this house. Why should I work for what can avail me nothing?"

Reid looked much disappointed.

"But the scoundrel has frightened my daughter," he said impulsively. "It is a shame, if you know the man, that you should not tell us. I'll have you punished, if— No, I don't mean that; but it is an infernal shame, and—"

He had got red in the face, while he was speaking, and Ram Mandana smiled slightly.

"But how do you know that I know anything as to the man you ask of? I am not a god, that I should know all things."

Sir John Savage frowned.

"Look here," he said in English. "You know well enough what we came after, or you are no true *yogin*. What is the reason you will not help us? Don't you want to?"

Another faint smile crossed the impassive features of the Hindoo.

"I have said that I need no money, and that I fear no evil. If the sahibs have nothing more to ask of me, they might as well return home."

Savage rose from his seat, and faced the Hindoo angrily.

"Now, look here," he said, fiercely, in the hectoring way that Anglo-Indians learn, to treat all Indians alike. "If you refuse to help us, it will only be an hour from now when you will be thrust, neck and heels, into a cell where all your '*yoga*' won't get you out. You know well enough what we have come here for."

The other smiled again, with a still more settled air of mild contempt.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE.

"THE sahibs are not right to threaten a man who has never seen them before," said Ram Mandana, in the same even, passionless tones, that he had employed throughout the interview. "I am one who has never harmed any, under your English laws, and I know enough of them to know that you cannot imprison me, without a trial. If you have nothing more to say—"

He did not finish the sentence, but waved his hand toward the door; and General Reid, who had witnessed the failure of his friend's method of negotiation, broke out:

"I knew it would not do, Savage. Let me speak to him."

Ram Mandana turned to him with a sweet smile.

"If the sahib has anything to say, I am ready to hear it, but I am not ready to be threatened by any one, in this country."

"Well, then, look here, Ram Mandana," began Reid, "I am in trouble and I came to you to help me. There is a man who goes about the country and does atrocious things. You must have heard of him. The people call him Spring-Heel Jack. He has nearly killed my daughter twice, and I fear he will do it, if he comes the third time. Cannot you give us a clew to him, by which he may be caught?"

The Hindoo compressed his lips.

"The sahib appears to make one mistake. I am no wizard, who makes his living by cheating poor credulous people, telling them that I can find stolen goods, and prophesy the future. I am but a humble follower of the truth, and not capable of miracles."

"But you know who the man is," urged Reid.

Ram Mandana shook his head.

"I know nothing about him. I have taken no interest in the matter. If I wish, I can find out; but it will only be for my own satisfaction, and not to oblige an Englishman. I owe them nothing."

"But if you are a follower of the '*yoga*' doctrine, you must hold that it is a meritorious deed to save the helpless from harm," urged Reid. "You will earn the gratitude of a father, and the prayers of one you will save."

Ram Mandana bowed gravely.

"That is true; but you should have said that in the first place. Your friend has threatened me, and if you have nothing else to say, I shall be pleased to see your departure."

He had grown perfectly inflexible now, and they saw, from the expression of his face, that it was useless to persevere.

General Reid bowed stiffly and turned to go from the room, while Sir John Savage, who had been chafing all the time, burst out:

"All right, Ram Mandana. You shall hear from us before long—perhaps sooner than you have any idea of just now."

And the angry old officer stepped out of the room, followed by Reid, Ram Mandana's suave, but scornful smile, remaining unaltered until they had reached the stairs, and were descending.

He saw them go to the door; and the servant, who made his appearance in the style of the true Oriental, noiseless and ready, at the moment he was needed, opened it wide, and bowed to the floor as he did so.

But Sir John Savage did not intend to be got rid of so easily. As he stood at the door, he beckoned to the Bow street runners—precursors of the modern detective—who had followed the pair to the strange house, and the Hindoo servant saw them coming, running up the street.

Ram Mandana calling from the top of the stairs, as he heard the footsteps:

"Cast them out, quick!"

He spoke in Hindoostanee, and the obsequious servant suddenly developed into an athlete.

With a sudden shove Sir John Savage did not expect, he sent that officer sliding down the steps, and before Reid could defend himself, the Hindoo had seized him by the shoulders, and pushed him out, after the other, when the door was slammed to, and the bolts shot, so swiftly that, before the runners could get anywhere near the house, the two disgusted gentlemen were standing at the bottom of the steps, disheveled in dress and red in the face with anger, but completely discomfited.

The officers came running up, and a crowd was collected in a shorter space of time than could have been deemed possible, the rough people of the quarter all interested in the fact of the summary ejection of the visitors, and rather inclined to sympathize with the owner of the house, as one of their own friends, while the strangers were of another sort altogether.

Sir John Savage was furious.

"Break down the doors," he said angrily to the men who came up to him. "The infernal scoundrel has dared to put us out of his place."

But the officers with him did not seem to be inclined to obey the order; for one of them said, half apologetically:

"It can't be done, your honor, unless we has a warrant. Hevery man's 'ouse is 'is castle, you know, and the cove 'ad the right to put ye out if so be 'e put 'is 'ands softly on ye."

"But he didn't," snapped Sir John angrily. "He had the impudence to push me—me, Sir John Savage. I never heard of such a thing! What is the country coming to, when these niggers are treated the same as if they were born Englishmen. Break open the door, and I'll take the responsibility."

But the wary officer was not to be induced to risk a legal fight.

"No, no, your honor," he said. "There's more ways of killin' a dog than chokin' 'im to death with butter. Let's try if we can't get 'im out peaceable, fu'st."

He ascended the steps and knocked at the door, making a considerable noise, when an upper window was opened, and the Ram Mandana himself looked out, and asked quietly:

"What is the trouble with the gentlemen?"

"This 'ere gent says as 'ow you've been a-shovin' of 'im, and 'e wants to 'ave you took up," said one of the officers, half apologetically. "Now look-a 'ere my man. If you want us to go for a warrant, it won't take long, and it'll be the worse for you in the hend. You jest come down peaceable and we'll 'ave you afore the beak, and the 'ole thing hover, in no time! Best thing you can do. Lord bless me! It ain't nothin' goin' afore the beak."

The Hindoo waved his hand to the people in the street below.

"I have lived here quietly," he said, "for a long time; and no man can say I have disturbed the neighborhood. These men came and tried to disturb me, so I told my servant to put them out from the house. It is my right, and you would all have exercised the same. I shall not come forth, till you bring a warrant."

He closed the window, and the officer shrugged his shoulders, and said to Sir John:

"Your honor sees 'ow it is. We can't do nothin', till we gits warrants for the Hinjuns. If your honor likes to swear to the assault we can 'ave the thing done quick."

But Sir John had had time to cool his passion, while looking at the lowering faces of the people round him, and he said sullenly:

"No, never mind, now. Let's get out of this, Reid. We were fools to come in here. The fellow is only one of those swindling conjurers, after all. Come along."

And they took their departure, followed by the jeers of the crowd behind them, the people of the quarter being disposed to think that the Hindoo, whom they had never disliked, had done rather a fine thing in throwing the two "nobs" out of doors.

The two friends meanwhile pursued their way out of the low neighborhood they had faced, so much to their sorrow, and it was not till they got to the open districts of the West End of London that they breathed freely.

Then they dismissed their escort, with injunctions to say nothing of what had happened, and wended their way to the baronet's house, where Rose was still staying with Lady Savage.

"One thing is certain," remarked Sir John, as he and his friend smoked their hookahs in the smoking-room. "That nigger knows more than he chooses to let people think, and he knows the secret of Spring-Heel Jack. Till they have caught the rascal, it might be as well for you to send Rose away with Lady Savage to some place where the scoundrel never makes his appearance. He has never been seen, except near London. What do you say to Hampton Court?"

The old general, who had been looking dejected as the day wore on (for he had a nervous horror of the coming night, ever since the way in which it had been made hideous by the apparition of Spring-Heel Jack) brightened up at once.

"The very place," he said. "The scoundrel will never dare to come there. Besides, it is not so gloomy as the Tower, and I rather think that the place has a good deal to do with Rose's terror. But can you obtain entrance there?"

Sir John nodded.

"My sister, Lady Balcarras, has a suite in the palace. Balcarras, you know, is something in the household, and, between us two, the rooms save him money, for he is as poor as a church-mouse. Mary will take her in for a visit, and we can arrange the thing in such a way that the child will not suspect there is any plan about it."

So it was arranged by the kind-hearted baronet, and before the afternoon had worn into twilight, Sir John's family carriage rolled into the precincts of Hampton Court, then a royal residence—the extensive palace being also the resort of quite a number of families, who had from time immemorial the privilege of apartments in the building, and constituted a colony of themselves, not so large then as it is now, but much more happy and contented; for they were in the immediate presence of royalty itself, and the old king was very gracious.

Here Rose and her protector arrived, and were received with welcome by Lady Balcarras, who had been forewarned by a special messenger, and with whom Lady Savage left Rose.

CHAPTER XV.

HAMPTON COURT.

HAMPTON COURT is a sleepy place to-day, and it was a sleepy place when Rose Reid went there.

The greatest excitement which the eminently respectable inhabitants allowed themselves was a walk in the gardens in the evening, when there was a chance that the king might be there with the good queen, when it was the custom of his majesty to speak graciously to his loyal subjects, and throw off the state which he had to maintain at most times.

In those days the king—George III.—had not developed the taint of insanity which afterward made him end his days in misery, and he was yet comparatively a young man, who delighted in the quiet side of life, and hated splendor and the ceremonies which surrounded him when at court.

Accordingly, Lady Balcarras thought that the best thing she could do, to amuse her young visitor, would be to take her into the great gardens in the evening, and give her a taste of the mild excitement in which the denizens of Hampton Court indulged, under the delusion that it was quite gay.

Rose, being a young lady who had never been presented at court, and a Briton at that, was of course curious to see a real live king, and was delighted at the prospect.

The sun was near setting when they went out into the gardens and strolled to and fro, under the shadow of the great vineyard, which was even then a show of the place.

They encountered numbers of ancient gentlemen and gentlewomen, who looked as if they had passed all their lives in the place; but there was no sign of the king and queen, as usual, till the sun had set and the moon risen.

It was full moon, and the night unusually warm for England, so that the air in the garden was pleasanter than in the house, and the walk quite enjoyable, in spite of the disappointment about the king, when they first went out.

But this did not last long, for very soon the young lady from the Tower heard a whisper: "There they come!"

Then she noticed the ancient personages in the garden draw aside respectfully, to allow the passage of a couple who came strolling into the garden, through the midst of the people, the gentleman bowing right and left in response to the low obeisances of the others; and Rose realized that she had at last got in sight of a real live king and queen.

Of course, she began to tremble, and to wish she had not come; but Lady Balcarras, who was with her, whispered:

"Don't be a goose, my dear. The king won't eat you, and the queen is as kind as you can possibly imagine."

So Rose stood her ground, and as the lady and gentleman advanced she found herself bowing as deeply as she could, and heard a soft voice say:

"Lady Balcarras, we are very glad to see you. I hope that my lord is well."

"Well, thank your majesty," said the lady, who had heard the same salutation a hundred times before. Then she was drawing back, when the queen noticed the shrinking figure of Rose.

"Is that a relative of yours?" she asked; while the king, who looked solemn and stupid, Rose thought, as far as she could see his face, added:

"Ay, ay, my lady, a strange face, but a pretty one. Who is she? who is she?"

He spoke rapidly, and with a slight stammer in his utterance.

"A young friend of mine, your majesty," said the lady, bowing again. "The daughter of General Reid, the Constable of the Tower, who, your majesty—"

"Hey, hey, what's that? what's that?" asked the king, hastily. "Reid's daughter? Hey? hey? Why, why! isn't that the girl that had a hug from Spring-Heel Jack, as they call him? Hey! hey! bless my soul, madam, what brought her here?"

The salutation was confusing, and Rose felt as if she should sink into the ground, as she heard the way the honest king blurted out the things that everybody else had concealed from her so carefully.

Lady Balcarras, to save her from the agitation which she felt from the trembling of the arm that rested on her own, answered for her:

"Please your majesty, it is the same; and the reason that we have brought her here is that the monster will not dare to come here after her."

"Very good, very good," said the king, in his disjointed way. "Very good. He shan't come here, if we can help—eh, madam? Well, well, my dear; don't be frightened any more. If the scamp comes here we will have him hung."

Then he passed on, and Lady Balcarras whispered to Rose as she took her away:

"He always says such things. You mustn't mind it, my dear. His majesty will have his joke."

But Rose, at the careless words of the old king, had received a wound that she could not hide so easily. She had almost forgotten the terrible monster that had frightened her so much, and the king had recalled it to her in a way that set her to trembling, at the idea that Spring-Heel Jack might, by some possibility,

get into the place where she was and frighten her again.

"Oh, Lady Balcarras," she whispered. "Do you think there is any possibility that *the thing* may get in here, after all? I should die, I am sure, if it were to come at me again."

"There's not the slightest danger," the lady replied. "The Guards are all round the palace; and, to get through them, the monster would have to make himself invisible, or fly over the wall. It is impossible, I tell you."

And Rose, much comforted by the assurance of the court lady, was content to take her pleasure in strolling in the moonlight, the more so that she discovered that there were some young gentlemen in the palace, officers of the Guards, one of whom she knew.

"Why, Lady Balcarras," she exclaimed, when she spied one of these persons approaching. "Is not that Mr. Howard of the Coldstreams?"

Lady Balcarras looked at the young man, who was coming up in the moonlight, in the midst of a group of young ladies. Her face hardened, as she said to Rose:

"Yes, it is. Do you know him then?"

"Why, of course. He is one of the officers that do duty in the Tower," said Rose innocently. "He and his brother are there, most of the time. I wonder what brings him here to-night?"

Lady Balcarras looked colder than ever.

"It is a pity," she said, "that such young men are not put out of the service. My lord has told me things about that young man—but never mind now, my dear. You are under my charge, and I don't want to see you too much with any young man of his reputation."

And so saying, she led Rose off, just as the officer, who, being in full uniform, was on duty of some kind at the palace, was coming forward to salute her.

George Howard looked rather nonplused at the cavalier way in which the noble lady whisked Rose off with her, turning the cold shoulder on him, literally as well as metaphorically.

He had been talking to the young ladies with him, to most of whom he was well known, by his presence at the court balls and festivities, and had made up his mind that he was going to have a happy time with Rose, on account of this lucky detail, which had come to him, quite unsolicited, bringing them together, when, in the ordinary course of things, he could not have expected to see her until she returned.

He had even spoken of her to one of the ladies with him, so that to be snubbed in the open way he had been, mortified him greatly.

"I wonder what is the matter?" he said, half to himself, as he gazed at the departing figure of the old lady, who swept off in a manner that showed she was offended.

One of the young ladies by him answered the question without knowing it, as she said, with a smothered giggle, to her next neighbor:

"Old Lady Balcarras doesn't like to see a man within a mile of one of her charges. I wonder she ever got married at all."

"Oh, there's no wonder about that," said the other, lightly. "The men were better in those days, she tells us. And then, she has a reason for taking Miss Reid away now. You know Mr. Howard has the reputation of a flirt; and the old lady is responsible for the morals of the young one as long as she is under her charge."

Howard was astounded. "I—a bad reputation?" he echoed. "Why, how can that be? Some one has been spreading false reports about me."

Lady Mary Churchill, who had spoken, laughed.

"Never mind," she said. "It makes no difference, after all, what she thinks. Some people here say it is you, and some your brother; but it is all the same to Lady Balcarras. She thinks that all the Howards are the same."

And as the lady had taken Rose with her into her apartments in the palace, and Howard had not the acquaintance with her that would have justified him in calling, he had to swallow the rebuff for the night as well as he could, and console himself by flirting with Lady Mary Churchill, who, on her part, was ready to give as good as he sent.

So the parties in the garden strolled to and fro in the moonlight till the great clocks in the city struck eleven, when they began to go into the palace one by one, and at last Howard, who had duty that night in charge of the inner guard, was left alone in the soft light of the moon, under the great vine which spread its branches for more than a hundred feet in all directions.

CHAPTER XVI.

SPRING-HEEL JACK COMES AGAIN.

THE young officer felt the cool air of the garden and the silence of the night a relief from the hurry and excitement of the city, to which he had been used, ever since he had been stationed at the Tower.

He was glad to be alone and think of his future, which, at that moment, began to look to him much brighter than it had.

His aged kinsman, the duke, was seriously ill,

and he knew that, at his death, he, plain Mr. Howard of the Guards, who had hitherto been a mere nobody, would become, by one stroke, the new Duke of Norfolk, able to match any person in the kingdom of Great Britain, short of royalty.

General Reid would not be apt to refuse him the hand of his daughter, *then*, he thought; and the idea gave him much comfort.

Then he thought to himself also:

"But Rose? How will it be with her? She is inclined to love me now, as I am, I think; but she does not know anything about my change of fortune; and, when it comes, she may make some scruple about marrying me, without her father's consent. Well, never mind that. Let the future take care of itself. We will enjoy the present as best we can. I am glad I was sent here, for it is certain that the scoundrel who has been persecuting her, all this time, will not venture to enter these precincts."

Then he remembered that he had to go and inspect the sentries, and started off on his mission, making his rounds of the gardens and little park, finding all quiet, the soldiers doing their duty as usual, around the palace.

When he got back to the great vine, the clocks were striking twelve, and he was going to the room appropriated to his use as officer of the guard, when, as he passed the palace by a pavilion, that he knew to be occupied by Lady Balcarras, he was surprised to see one of the windows was open, near the ground, and the figure of a lady in white thereat.

For a moment he was startled and drew back, fearing that he might be seen; but the next he recognized the figure with a thrill of joy.

It was his own mistress, and he could not resist the temptation to go forward in full view, under the window.

That he was seen, he knew; for the white figure instantly withdrew, but, as he continued his course past the window, going as slow as he could manage, he saw it reappear and beckon.

The young man was delighted and came under the window at once, when he saw Rose, in a white wrapper. She looked as if she had been crying, and whispered:

"George."

"Dearest," he answered.

Then he suddenly remembered that he had promised the old general that he would speak no word of love to Rose without her father's permission, and he hastily added:

"That is, Miss Reid. I beg your pardon; but your father forbids any nearer and dearer title."

"Oh, George," she faltered. "Lady Balcarras has been telling me such awful things about you."

Howard was astonished.

"About me? Why I have only the honor of the most distant acquaintance with her ladyship, and she surely cannot know anything about me."

"But she says she does," insisted Rose, with a sigh. "She says she has heard all sorts of things about you, and that you are reported to be one of the worst young men in town, always spending your money among prize-fighters, and low characters in general, and that—"

Here Rose stopped and colored deeply, as if she could not say all she knew.

Howard, on his part, was embarrassed. He saw that the worthy Lady Balcarras, who, having a Scotch husband, was a stricter Presbyterian than my lord himself, had heard stories about his scapegrace brother, Oliver, and had applied them to himself; but he could hardly tell Rose this, from family pride, if no other reason.

"I can assure you," he said, as quietly as he could, "that the reports her ladyship has been good enough to retail to you, have no foundation, and refer to another person altogether. But I did not come here to defend myself, Miss Reid. I saw that you had need of me, and I came to see what the necessity might be. If you have known me so little that you cannot dismiss the reports, as to my character, for what they are worth, I am sorry; but it cannot be helped. If you have no commands for me, I will—"

And he made a motion as if he was about to leave her, when she said quickly:

"But I don't believe them, George, and I don't want *her* to believe them either. Won't you come and call on her, and try and disabuse her ladyship of the idea she has about you?"

Howard was flattered at the request. He saw that Rose loved him, and was too innocent to hide it, while she earnestly desired that he should clear himself with others.

"I will do myself the honor to call on her ladyship in the morning, when I come off duty," he said. "And then I will try to disabuse her mind of the things she has listened to. In the mean time, Miss Reid, let me ask that you will not listen to anything against me, that does not come from your father. He has had opportunities to know me better than Lady Balcarras, and will not do me injustice."

"Indeed, Geo— I mean, Mr. Howard," the young lady replied hesitatingly, "I will not. But you do not know how nervous and fright-

ened I am. The king said something to me to-night that revived in my mind what I wished to forget, about that terrible monster that has frightened me so much. Oh, Mr. Howard, do you think there is any danger that he can come here?"

"None in the world," declared George positively. "I have been round to visit the guards, and they are all in their places; besides which, the garden is surrounded by a high brick wall, and no human being could get in, save by the river, where there is a post at the boat-house. You may rest secure that nothing can get in."

She clasped her hands, with an expression of great relief.

"Oh, I am so glad to hear that. But I am keeping you from your duties. And I am afraid that if Lady Balcarras should hear our voices—"

The idea frightened her so much that she hastily withdrew from the window; and George as quickly drew back, for he did not wish to embarrass her in any way.

The window was closed, but he had the consolation of seeing her kiss her hand to him through the glass, as she disappeared, when the young lover went his way rejoicing.

He made his rounds again, and found everything as quiet as ever, when he repaired to the room provided for the officer of the guard, and sat down for awhile, to think over his best way to approach Lady Balcarras in the morning.

That the old lady had confounded him with his brother, and had applied to him the stories she had heard about Oliver, was the most natural idea; but how should he disabuse her thereof?

While he was thinking of this, he began to nod in his seat; and must have fallen asleep; for he woke up with a start, nearly fallen off his chair, and, glancing at the clock, saw that it was three in the morning, and that the moon, which still shone through the window, was getting low in the heavens.

He started up and went out into the garden, to make another round among the sentries.

Why he did so, he could hardly have said, for the duty he had to do was mostly formal; but he had a vague sense that he was wanted in some way, and that something was wrong.

As he took his way through the garden, he was challenged by sentry after sentry, and found all on the alert, so that he began to think his fear unfounded.

He made the rounds; and, as he returned to his room, took the way by the window from which he had last seen Rose look forth.

As he drew near it, he was surprised to see a dark figure crouching under the window, in the shade of some shrubbery, as if to conceal itself from view. Thinking it a sneak thief or something of the sort, he ran forward to arrest the scamp, and had almost got there, when the figure rose up with a leap, and made a tremendous spring in the air. As it did so, he recognized the dreaded foe that had done so much harm to Rose already. Spring-Heel Jack had actually come to Hampton Court, and had dared the presence of royalty.

There was no mistaking the figure and the spring it made, as it was discovered.

With a muttered curse and anger, the young officer rushed at the figure, and it fled as fast as if it had been a deer.

George followed it, shouting to the sentries to "fire at whatever they saw."

In his eager excitement he had forgotten all about disturbing the palace.

But, run as he might, he could not overtake the figure, which scampered across the garden and ran across the line of sentries at the end, by the high wall.

Then came the loud report of a musket, and he saw the flash of a piece of one of the sentries. Whether the shot took effect or not he could not tell; but it did not stop the progress of the active figure.

It ran to the foot of the wall which stretched across its path, forbidding further progress in that direction.

"Stop the villain! It is Spring-Heel Jack!" he cried, as he ran on.

Then came two more shots, from a more distant part of the grounds, as the other sentries caught sight of the figure, and tried their hands on it; for he heard the bullets whistle through the air.

And then—he could hardly believe his eyes, but it was too plain to be doubted—Spring-Heel Jack gave a bound up in the air, turned a somersault and went over the high brick wall as if he had been a bird.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST CLEW.

If there had been excitement in London about the exploits of Spring-Heel Jack, when the monster had assaulted the Duke of Norfolk, the news that he had actually visited Hampton Court, sent the whole city nearly crazy.

The audacity of the visit, and the fact that the villain, whoever he might be, had not spared the "sacred presence of royalty itself," sent a thrill of horror through the breast of every loyal Briton.

But perhaps the most troubled man in London, when he heard of it, was old General Reid,

who had fondly thought he was saving his daughter from the further visits of the monster, and yet had actually exposed her to its assaults, without being able to be near her to protect her.

He did not hear about it, luckily for his peace of mind, till late in the afternoon of the next day; for there were no telegraphs in those days, and no daily papers.

The first intimation he had was in the arrival at the Tower of young George Howard, who had left the place with his company and his brother, the day before.

George came to him, in much agitation, to tell him that Spring-Heel Jack had made his appearance at the palace, the night before, and had been chased out.

"And Rose," asked her father, anxiously. "Did she see the villain?"

"Thank Heaven, no, sir. But she heard the shots the sentries fired at the creature, and the whole palace is in an uproar to-day. I fear that she will need your presence, to keep her from being ill from terror. As long as we can keep her from seeing the monster, it is a point gained; but, had I not been on guard last night, there is no telling what might have happened."

The young officer looked haggard, as if he had sat up all night, which was the fact, and General Reid said to him kindly:

"Mr. Howard, you have done well to come and tell me; and you are not to blame at all for the persecution this monster had come to inflict on my daughter. At the same time, it is very strange that Rose should be selected by him for so many of his visits, in succession."

"Not entirely so, sir," said George. "You remember that the Duke of Norfolk was assaulted, on the night after I had visited him. There seems to be some spite against me, in the mind of the scoundrel who is playing all these tricks, and the fact may yet give us a clew to him."

"But how are you going to work to find out anything about him?" asked the general, in a tone of helpless despair. "It seems as if the man—for he must be a man—has the skill of the evil one himself."

George shook his head.

"Not altogether, sir. We have nearly laid hands on him twice now, and the way he has escaped shows me that he must be a man, and not a ghost. He must know the ins and outs of the palaces, and therefore we are the more likely to be able to find him in the end. Such a man must be in the household of the king, or among the very guards that I myself belong to."

"Have you any suspicion?" asked the general eagerly. "It seems from the way you speak, as if you had."

Howard hesitated a moment, and the general watched him keenly. The young man seemed as if he did not like to say what was in his mind.

At last he said:

"I would rather not say, general. I may be right, and I may be wrong; but the suspicion I have is one that will require to be justified before I utter it to another person. I will tell you at some other time what I mean."

"But at least," the old man asked, "you will promise me that you will do your utmost to keep the villain from further molesting my daughter?"

"You may rest assured," the young man replied, "that if any act of mine can shield Miss Reid from harm, it shall be performed."

Then he rose to take his leave, adding:

"If you go down to Hampton Court, general, I am sure that the young lady should not be taken from thence. She is safer there than here, and I will venture my life that the villain will not tempt a second visit there to-night."

"Why not, sir?"

"Because the guard will be doubled, and a patrol will be walking in the ground all night, general. I have asked the privilege of standing guard again, without rest, and if he comes it will be a bad thing for him, or I am much mistaken."

"Then why are you not there now?" asked Reid.

"Because the monster never comes in daylight, and it is at night that the guard needs to be doubly careful. I have had some experience of this Spring-Heel Jack, and am the best person to hunt him down. You can rely on one thing, general, that if I once succeed in hunting him to his lair, it will go hard with him, if he were my own brother."

And George took his departure, leaving the old Constable of the Tower in a state of mind in which he hardly knew what to believe, as to the pranks of the evil-disposed monster that all London feared and hated, under the name of "Spring-Heel Jack."

As for Howard, his first visit, after he left the general, was paid to the guard room, where he asked for John Spring, the Gypsy, who had been lying there, under accusation of "absence without leave," for two whole days.

The young officer, being in command of the company, in the absence of the captain, was admitted to the prisoner's room, where he found the Gypsy stretched on a hard bench.

"Well, Spring," he said, as the man, who was now quite sober, having been deprived of liquor for two days, rose hastily and saluted. "Are you tired of this sort of thing, or do you want to be tried by court-martial and flogged?"

The Gypsy looked down at the floor.

"I suppose," he said slowly, "that your honor's come to release me, if I'll promise to do better for the future; or your honor wouldn't ask the question."

"You are right. I don't like to see a man of your size, and parts, lying here, when you ought to be serving the king. If you will promise to behave yourself, I will let you out, and you can come with me, and do regular duty at the palace at Hampton Court."

Spring seemed to be touched by the kindness shown him; for he said shamefacedly:

"Your honor's very good. I'd rather go to some place where the men don't know me; and, if your honor can promise that I shan't be tied up at the triangles, I'll try to do better for the future."

Howard nodded.

"I will see that you are not punished, if you will do your duty. But I want you for a special service, to-night; or I should not have come here to let you out."

He caught a sly glance that the Gypsy cast at him, from under his black brows, that reminded him of the stare of an animal in a trap, as it sees the trapper coming to kill it.

"I'm ready to do what your honor says," he replied rather sullenly; "but I hope your honor will remember I'm only a recruit. I don't know what the old soldiers do."

Howard curled his lip.

"You are not so much of a recruit as you make out, Spring. There are all the marks of an old soldier about you; and it is because you are so sharp that I want you. You have heard of Spring-Heel Jack, I suppose?"

The question seemed puzzle Spring; for he looked as stupid as an owl, as he answered:

"I don't know, your honor. I ain't learned, ye know."

"You don't need to be learned to know that. All London has heard of the creature, that goes in the night, frightening feeble women and children. He made his appearance first at Hamptonstead Heath, where there are a number of your people; and I half-suspect that some of them are in the secret. Last night he came to Hampton Court, in the very neighborhood of the king, and I am determined to find out all about him. I want you for my orderly to-night, to hunt this creature down, if it comes again. That will be your duty. You Gypsies are all poachers, and the like. You do most of your work in the dark, and know how to go round at night. I want you to help me to find this person. Will you do your duty?"

The Gypsy had listened attentively as the officer spoke; and, when Howard had finished, he said earnestly:

"I'll do anything to 'elp your honor; for you're the fust person treated the poor Romany as if he was a brother. I'll go with your honor, and I'll venture to say that this 'ere Spring-Heel Jack won't come where we are, your honor."

"That is not what I want," said Howard. "I want to catch him, and not to keep him away. He will keep out of sight, till the hue and cry is over, and then he will make his appearance somewhere else, and frighten some other lady out of her senses."

The Gypsy seemed to be cogitating. At last he said slowly:

"Your honor seems to think that I know sommat about this Spring-Heel Jack."

"I do, and I am right. This man, whoever he is, acts like a Gypsy. He can jump like a deer, and there is no Englishman who can do that against a Gypsy. He first came out near the favorite place for your people. You can stop him if you want to, and I want you to do it."

"And s'pose I don't want to do it?" said the Gypsy, with a kind of snarl.

"Then you will have to go to the triangles," said George, coldly.

The threat seemed to determine the other, for he said, with a kind of grin:

"Your honor has me in a 'ole, and I can't get out. I'm game fur anythink your honor wants."

So it was settled, and the Gypsy released.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUKE'S VISIT.

THE news had gone round the town that the old Duke of Norfolk, in spite of the agitation he had suffered from the assault of Spring-Heel Jack, was able to go out in a carriage, the very next day.

When Howard came to the Tower to take away the Gypsy recruit and make preparations to catch Spring-Heel Jack once more, the heavy and gorgeous coach of the great nobleman, with its purple hammer-cloth on the box, and the well-known Howard coat-of-arms on the panels, was driven up to the door of the Tower of London, and the gorgeous flunky got out and asked for the Constable of the Tower, sending up the card of the great duke.

General Reid was at that moment preparing

to go to Hampton Court to see his daughter, and find if she had been much agitated by the occurrence of the night before; but the sight of the card of the greatest man in England, outside of the royal family, caused the old officer to abandon his trip for awhile, to receive the duke; for it will never do to make an enemy of a duke in such a place as England.

There was, indeed, a short struggle in his mind whether he should not go down to the door to receive the old noble; but, when he reflected on his own dignity as Constable of the Tower, he concluded that the civility would be too much like fawning, and sent down word that he would be "happy to see his grace."

There was a short pause, while his message was being taken down; and the old general felt not a little flurried at the unusual visit.

What it could be about, he did not know; but he had a suspicion that it was connected, in some way, with his daughter and young Howard; and he congratulated himself that he had set his foot down on the intimacy so that no one would be able to say that he had hunted down the heir to the duchy of Norfolk.

While he was waiting, the old general put on a scarlet uniform coat, instead of the undress frock in which he had been when the card came in, and when he heard the slow step of the old duke on the stair, he went out to the end of the corridor, to do the utmost to honor him.

He saw an old man, bent with years; with a face that resembled a nutmeg-grater, from the number of wrinkles therein.

The old duke was plainly dressed, at a time when silks and velvets were the fashion for men as well as women; but he wore his sword, though the fashion was beginning to die out.

He seemed to be much exhausted by his journey up the stairs, for he was breathing hard and could not speak in answer to the salutation of the general till he had been standing, waving his hat and bowing in the courtly style of an older age, for more than a minute.

Then he managed to get out:

"General Reid, I have done myself the honor of calling, but my health is so poor that I would have craved the indulgence that you should come down to see me at the carriage, had it not been my first visit."

"Had your grace made the request," replied Reid, with reserve, "I should have been bound to come down; but, as your grace is aware, in this place I represent his majesty, and am bound to keep up the dignity of the service."

The duke, who had now gotten his breath, bowed again, and answered:

"Very proper, indeed. I am desirous of having some private conversation with you, if you can grant it to me."

General Reid bowed low and led the way into his private rooms, where the duke took a seat and seemed to be much relieved at resting.

He did not appear to be anxious to open the conversation, till the general asked him:

"May I inquire to what I owe the honor of your grace's visit? In truth, I am anxious to go to Hampton Court, this afternoon, to see my daughter. I presume your grace is aware that Spring-Heel Jack went there last night?"

The duke started.

"The monster that so nearly killed me? Why, this is amazing, sir! And you say that your daughter was assaulted?"

"No, your grace, not assaulted this time, thanks to the presence of Mr. Howard, who had the guard at the palace that night. But I fear very much that she will be frightened half to death, and I was about to go to see her before the evening was so far advanced that I should be needed in my own post."

The duke pursed up his lips. The evident agitation of the father did not seem to have much effect on him, but only what he had let drop in the course of his speech.

"Hum! So Mr. Howard had the guard," he said, slowly. "Which Mr. Howard, may I ask, sir?"

"Lieutenant Howard, your grace."

"Indeed! It is a singular thing, sir, that I should have come here on that very account—that is, to see and speak to you about this very young gentleman."

The duke spoke in his coldest and most haughty manner, and the general opened his eyes.

"I am not aware," he said, "that there is any connection between myself and Mr. Howard, your grace. I am not the colonel of his regiment, and he is not under my command, save when his detail calls him to the Tower."

"Nevertheless," said the duke, "there is a rather close connection between you, if I am to believe what the young gentleman tells me, sir."

General Reid colored high.

"I am at a loss to understand your grace," he said stiffly. "I repeat that there is no connection between Mr. Howard and myself, save that of temporary duty."

"But there *might* be one, which would be much closer, if only the useless old duke were out of the way," said the old man, his eyes gleaming with an evil light. "I have heard about it, sir, and from the young man himself. I will do

him the justice to say, he behaved in a way that shows the blood of the Howards has not fallen on a man unworthy to have it in his veins; but, all the same, there is a condition in the succession to the title and estates of the first peer of England, that you may not know perfectly, or it might make you more cautious than you have hitherto been, to save your daughter from a fate worse than that of being frightened by a mountebank, like Spring-Heel Jack."

The general managed to control his temper sufficiently to say:

"I repeat that I do not understand your grace, and beg you to explain yourself."

The old duke smiled in a way that showed he enjoyed the suspense of the other.

"Ay, ay, I'll explain, in such a way that you can hardly fail to understand," he said sneeringly. "The fact is, sir, that the present Duke of Norfolk is not so old and decrepit as many people think, and may outlast the young gentleman who is the next heir to the title. In the mean time, there is another thing, of which you are probably not aware, that all the entails of property, pertaining to the various estates, have lapsed in my person; and the only thing of which I am not able to dispose by my will, is the bare title itself."

He said this with infinite slyness, and stared at the old general all the while, as if to read his thoughts.

Reid, on the other hand, who suspected to what the old man was coming, on account of what he knew already, was growing angrier, and now he burst out:

"What is this to me, duke? I have nothing to do with your family secrets."

The duke calmly took out his snuff-box before he answered.

"My dear sir," he said, blandly, "there is no need of getting excited on the subject. I assure you that I did not come here to quarrel with you, but merely to have a little frank talk."

"Then, if your grace will do me the favor to be quick, I shall be much obliged," said Reid, sharply. "I have already told you that I am in haste, and your grace is consuming valuable time by not coming to the point. What does your grace wish to say to me?"

"Merely this," the old nobleman said, in his slowest and most deliberate tones. "If Mr. Howard marries without my consent, he will be cut off without a shilling in his pocket. He may be the next Duke of Norfolk, for I cannot control the title; but I can leave away all the fortune that is necessary to keep up the title, and, by the powers of Heaven, sir, I shall do it, unless he keeps away from your daughter till I am under the sod. Is that plain, sir? I have heard all about it. I can understand how you have thrown the young lady at his head, to have the glory of marrying your daughter above her station. I do not care a rap for my cousin, Howard, sir, and if he were to be killed to-morrow, I should not shed a tear. But I have a great respect for the name of my family, and, by Heaven, sir, I say the next Duchess of Norfolk *shall not* be a girl who hasn't a penny to buy a wedding-gown. There, sir, I have said what I came to say, and now, what is your answer?"

And the vicious old duke leaned back in his chair and stared at Reid, as if he wanted the other to see that he meant what he said.

But the old Constable, from the open insolence shown him, had been so far shocked that he had had time to collect his thoughts. At first he had been almost on the point of bursting out in a tremendous rage; but, as the duke finished, he looked so diabolical in his malignity the general made up his mind he would give him no excuse to triumph.

He actually smiled as he replied:

"Your grace has only made one little mistake, which I must be pardoned for speaking of."

"And what is that, sir?"

"Your grace seems to be under the impression that I am willing that my daughter should be the wife of Mr. Howard. That is the mistake. I have already told the young gentleman that I could under no circumstances allow him to pay his addresses to her."

The duke sneered openly.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DUKE SNUBBED.

"As if I did not know all that stuff!" said the duke with a curl of his lip that spoke volumes. "Why, man, I don't blame you. There isn't a man in the kingdom that would not have done the same, if he had the same chance."

Reid kept his temper.

"I was about to say," he went on calmly, "when your grace did me the favor to interrupt me, in my own house, that I had forbidden Mr. Howard to say a word to my daughter, as soon as he asked my consent. I am not one who wishes his daughter to marry into a family where she is not wanted. At the same time, I am neither the man to yield to a threat; and, in this case, your grace has forgotten what is due to both of us. From henceforth, if Mr. Howard chooses to pay his court to my daughter, he is welcome. Till your grace spoke, there might have been a doubt in my mind as to how the match would be looked on in the world; but,

now that your grace has said explicitly that, in the event of my daughter marrying Mr. Howard, he will be cut off with a shilling, or without one, as your grace pleases, I am free to say that I have enough for both of them, and if the next Duke of Norfolk comes into my family as a beggar, the shame will fall on the present duke, and on no one else. I have the honor to wish your grace a very good morning. It is an open day at the Tower, and your grace is free to look in at the Crown-room and Armory, the same as the rest of the people. Good-morning, duke."

And the old general actually got up, took his sword and left the room, the old duke still in the chair into which he had sunk, speechless with astonishment and indignation, at the cavalier way in which he was being treated.

When he had recovered his senses enough to leave the room, he went down-stairs very quietly and got into his carriage with all the dignity of a duke to whom nothing has happened; but, all the way home, he was swearing to himself, with a vicious emphasis that showed he meant every one of the imprecations.

As for General Reid, he ordered his horse, and rode all the way to Hampton Court at a gallop, astonishing Lady Balcarras so much, when she saw him coming, that the good lady thought something serious must have happened.

Rose came out to see her father, looking pale and frightened.

"Oh, sir," she said "I am so glad you have come. I am not ill, father; but I feared you had heard about what happened last night, and were frightened at the news. I did not see the monster, thanks to Mr. Howard."

The general got down from his horse, before he answered her.

He felt very thankful to see her, and to note that she was in good health; for he had feared that the shock of the third visit of the monster might have affected her fatally.

"Rose," he said, in a low voice, "God be praised that young Howard was here. He is a brave young fellow, and a good one. If he had not been where he was, I might have had no daughter, to-day."

Rose colored deeply as she looked down, but she was saved the necessity of speaking by the appearance of Lady Balcarras, who came down as fast as she could, to see her old friend, and ask if anything had happened to bring him to Hampton Court so fast.

"Nothing, dear Lady Balcarras," he said, "but the desire to see this little maid of mine, and find if she were yet alive, after the fright she got last night."

"Fright!" echoed the old lady, "you may well say fright, general. I was never so frightened in my life, as when I woke up all of a sudden with a start. It seemed to me as if the world was coming to an end, when the soldiers began to fire off their guns and shout. Such a thing was never heard here, before, since the days when there used to be revolutions, and all that sort of thing, in England, in the days of our grandfathers. I do think, general, the soldiers ought to consider that ladies are easily alarmed, and keep their shooting for other places."

The old lady was very fidgety and nervous, and disposed to quarrel with any one who disturbed her from her good night's rest, while she had seen nothing of the visitor of the previous night, and had therefore no idea of what made the soldiers fire.

The general, on the other hand, having seen the monster, and knowing what an effect it had on his daughter, was inclined to be vexed at the tone taken by the old lady.

"I think, Lady Balcarras," he said, sharply, "that the alarm, suffered by you at the sound of the muskets in the night, could have been but a trifle, to what you would have felt, if the monster, Spring-Heel Jack, had come before you in his hideous shape and perhaps attacked you with his great claws. He is not likely to take time or place when the convenience of ladies can be consulted, as to the means to be taken to drive him away. He takes his sole pleasure in frightening ladies to death, and if he be not shot soon, I am not sure but he will end in killing some. Mr. Howard did well, being on guard, to order the firing. If he had not, the scoundrel might have done some serious mischief, whereas now it is a chance but he was hit by some one, and it may put a stop to his malicious pranks."

He did not understand the expression of cold displeasure that swept over the face of Lady Balcarras as he spoke, but he was enlightened when she said to him, in her most haughty manner:

"Really, general, if I had thought that this Mr. Howard was a friend of yours, I should not have undertaken the charge of your daughter. I regret to say that the young gentleman is not the sort of person I should choose a daughter of mine to associate with, if I had one."

General Reid, who was as touchy in his way as any one else, immediately drew himself up.

"No daughter of mine need be beholden to any person to whom her visits are unwelcome, Lady Balcarras," he began stiffly.

"Oh, no; I did not mean that," the old lady

eagerly interrupted. "My brother committed the young lady to my charge, and I have done my duty by her; but surely, general, you cannot have any idea of the character of this Mr. Howard, that you praise him openly before your daughter. That is all I meant to say. Why, the young man is not received in any society now, though they say he is, in some distant way, connected with the great Howards."

"The connection is so far from being distant, my lady, that the young gentleman is the next heir, and will be duke himself as soon as the present incumbent dies," said the old general, rather triumphantly. "I hope you do not think the premier duke of the realm an improper person for my daughter to be seen with!"

But Lady Balcarras was not to be moved by even this appeal to her pride of rank.

"I certainly think that she should not be seen too much with one to whose rank she can never hope to aspire," she answered. "The court is the place of all others where a girl's reputation is easiest to destroy; and to have a man of Howard's bad name seen with her, is of itself enough to make her an object of suspicion."

The old general had been listening to her all this time with a puzzled face, and now he burst out suddenly:

"My dear Lady Balcarras, there must be some strange mistake here. Mr. Howard is one of the quietest and most modest of men."

Lady Balcarras smiled pityingly.

"My dear general, you have not lived as long at court as I have, and do not know the court reports as well as I do."

"I confess that, madam; but may I ask what are the reports as to this young gentleman?"

Lady Balcarras glanced at Rose.

"I would prefer to speak to you privately, in doing that, general. There are things that we do not speak about, before young ladies."

"Then, madam, the sooner you tell me what is the matter with the reputation of this young gentleman, the better; for, as a fact, he has but lately asked my consent to his marriage with my daughter, and I have more than half made up my mind that it would be a good match."

Rose heard what her father said, and she blushed scarlet, while old Lady Balcarras looked scandalized, as she said:

"In that case, general, it might be as well that you know what you ought to know, before you finally commit yourself. If you will come into the house, I will tell you what I mean."

The general bowed coldly, and followed the old lady into the house; while Rose, fearing, she knew not what, went to the drawing-room, and tried to occupy her thoughts by reading a book.

Her chaperon was in the library, with her father, talking, for near an hour; and Rose was waiting anxiously for the outcome of the interview. As she sat at the window pretending to read, her eyes were on the gardens without, and she saw the guard being relieved, distinguishing the figure of the officer, who was Oliver Howard. The girl had a repugnance against this young man, which she could not explain to herself; but against which she struggled; for was he not the brother of George, and would he not some day, perhaps, be her brother-in-law?

She watched him at his duties, and could not but admit that he was a handsome fellow; but when the last of the guard was marching back to its quarters, under the command of the sergeant, she saw the figure of George, and noted the contrast between the two brothers, saying to herself as she did so:

"No wonder I cannot like him. How inferior to my George!"

And just as she was thinking this, her father came into the room, and said gravely:

"Rose, I wish to speak to you about this Mr. Howard. You will have to give him up, child."

CHAPTER XX.

THE BROTHERS' STRUGGLE.

IN the mean time George Howard, blissfully unconscious of the storm that was brewing over his head from the secret revelations of the scandal-loving old lady, had just returned to Hampton Court with the Gypsy recruit as his orderly, and watched the evening relief of the guard before he went to his brother to tell him that he would take his post for the night.

He could not help a glance at the windows of the lodge where the Balcarras family resided, in the hope of catching a glimpse of Rose; but she had just been called away by her father for his mysterious communication, and was not to be seen at the pane, though he had been sure he spied her as he entered the gardens.

He, therefore, with a disappointed air, went to the guard-house with Spring, and found his brother there, to whom he said:

"I have come to relieve you, brother, and will take your watch for the night."

Oliver stared at him.

"Take my watch for the night? What are you thinking about? I am as competent as you to do my duty."

"That is not the question," returned his brother. "I am in command of the company, in the absence of Lord Dacres, and I wish to take your duty to-night. I order you to leave your post, and I will be responsible to the adjutant

for the change, which I have already arranged with him."

Oliver shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well, if you put it in that way, of course I am willing; but you don't expect that you will ever catch this Spring-Heel Jack, do you?"

"I not only expect it, but I am sure of it," returned the young officer, firmly. "If he comes this way to-night, he will get what he has never got before: a bullet into his disguise!"

"Indeed!" said Oliver, with a smile. "And who is to put the bullet into him? I hear that you all tried your hands last night and missed him every time. The fact is, Spring-Heel Jack is one too many for any of the thick-wits that have been after him. He laughs at danger, and all the plans you can lay won't catch him."

"Do you think you could do any better, Oliver?" asked George, coldly.

Oliver laughed aloud.

"Better? Of course I could. To catch him, it takes a man that can do the things he does, and there are few men in London who can turn a back-somerset."

"How do you know that?" asked George.

"How do I know it? Because I have been among men who can, and I know that it takes time to learn the things this fellow does. The fact is, George, this Spring-Heel Jack must be an acrobat, and if you want to catch him, you must go among the men who make a trade of that sort of thing. I have been among them and learned more of their tricks than you ever will, because you are nothing but a milksop. You can fence, and that is about all you can do. Why, I can throw you on your back myself, and not half try."

George eyed his brother sharply.

"Perhaps you may be mistaken. I have thrown men before now, though I do not make a practice as you do of going among prize-fighters. Did you see the Gypsy recruit that I brought in?"

Oliver turned a queer glance on his brother.

"Yes, I have seen him. Where did you pick him up, George?"

"In the street, where he tried on the tricks that you say I am so deficient in. Well, ask him who was laid on his back?"

Oliver cast a keen glance on his brother, and then on the stalwart figure of the Gypsy recruit, who was lounging at the door as he spoke, waiting for orders from his officer.

"Why, he threw you, of course," he said, "or if he did not, and let you do the trick to him, it was because he wanted to let you think you were a better man than he. You don't know that man. I have seen him fight in the Fives Court, and there are not many in England can hold up hands before him without getting a licking."

George beckoned to the recruit.

"Come here," he said.

Spring came in and stood respectfully at the door, with his cap in his hand.

"Tell Mr. Howard whether you can throw me on my back or not," said George, quietly.

The Gypsy fidgeted uneasily.

"It is not for the likes of me to talk of throwing your honor."

"But suppose I should tell you that I wanted exercise, and you were to do your best, what then? Could you do it or not?"

Spring hesitated, and glanced, first at one brother, then at the other.

"I don't know, your honor," he said at last.

"I ain't anxious to try, for your honor is a good man of his hands, as I know to my cost."

"Why, you don't mean to say," burst in Oliver, "that you think he can get the best of you in a fair tussle? If I thought it—"

"Well, what?" asked George.

"By Jove, I'd tell you to have a tussle with me, for fun," said Oliver, measuring his brother carefully from head to foot.

It was a singular thing that the two brothers, though they had been brought up near each other, had never had a quarrel in childhood which had come to blows, and that their pursuits had taken them so far apart, in manhood, that neither of them knew, from experience, what the other could do, in the way of athletic exercise.

George Howard smiled.

"You would not be the first man I have deceived, Oliver, if you tried it."

"Then, by Jove, let's try it," cried Oliver; and, as he spoke, he threw off his coat and stood up opposite his brother, in an attitude that showed he had studied the art of wrestling in a professional way.

George turned to Spring.

"Shut the door," he said, "and let nobody in, till I have settled this matter."

Then he beckoned to Oliver, and the other followed him into a court-yard at the back of their quarters, where there was a grass-plot, on which they would have plenty of room to play.

Spring followed the two gentlemen, after he had locked the door, with an inscrutable expression on his dark face.

He saw the elder brother throw off his coat and advance on the younger brother, who had the best attitude of the two, and moved round

with a stealthy grace that reminded one of a panther, as he watched for an unguarded spot to catch his hold.

"It's catch as catch can, George," he said, and George nodded without answering.

Then the two brothers moved closer together, and Oliver suddenly clutched George with both hands on the neck, trying to send him forward on his face by a quick jerk.

George, to his astonishment, ducked his head and rushed in, catching a waist-hold before Oliver, who had thought him a greenhorn, could understand that he had a master before him.

The hold secured, the rest was child's play. In a moment the younger brother was snatched off his feet and dashed down on the ground, with a thud that took away his breath, when George remarked quietly:

"You see, brother Oliver, that it is not always the men who hang round Fives Court that are the best at a hold."

Oliver looked up from the ground on which he had been so rudely deposited.

There was a dark scowl on his face as he said:

"You couldn't have done that, if I had known that you were anything but a yokel. I gave you the hold for fun. You can't do it again."

George smiled.

It was singular to see the way in which he looked at his brother. One would never have thought that any tie of blood existed between the two men; but rather that they were bitter enemies. George curled his lip as he said:

"I have no time to waste, trying you at the same thing, twice over; but if you like to get the gloves, at which you think you are an adept, I'll show you that I can fight, as well as I can wrestle."

But the other rose from the ground, scowling still, and said, with a glance at Spring:

"No, no, not to-day. I may give you a chance to try what you know, some day; but not with witnesses. In the mean time, sir, look to yourself, when you meet Spring-Heel Jack; for he may not let you off as easily as I have."

And, not waiting to explain the nature of his meaning, he went out of his brother's quarters, and was seen going over to his own chambers.

Spring, as soon as he had gone, had a quiet little laugh, all to himself, in the midst of which George caught him, and he became as grave as a judge.

"What are you laughing at, you scoundrel?" asked the young officer haughtily. "If I choose to have a bout with my own brother, it is not to say that every recruit must have his fun out of the sight. If I catch you saying a word of this to one of the men, you shall fare badly."

Spring saluted respectfully.

"I ain't the man to say a word, your honor. It was a pretty throw ye gave 'im, though; warn't it? 'E thought it was all one way, and the fust 'e knowed 'is 'eels was in the hair, and 'e on 'is back! 'Ope yer honor 'll 'scuse me fur laughin'; but it were 'nuff to make a cat laugh."

George was mollified; for it is not in human nature to repel praise of physical prowess, no matter what the difference of rank between the praiser and praised.

"You will attend on me, to-night, Spring," he said, "and will keep your piece loaded for Spring-Heel Jack, if he comes. I am determined that, before we have done, I will penetrate the mystery of that scoundrel."

Spring smiled softly to himself as he heard the speech, and observed:

"Yes, your honor—if we catch him."

CHAPTER XXI.

OLIVER'S VISIT.

HIS grace, the Duke of Norfolk, on the evening after he had paid his voluntary visit to the Tower, had returned to his own gorgeous mansion, where he ordered his frugal meal of toast and tea, in the library, and told Jarvis that he did not want to be disturbed by visitors. The obedient flunky said he would see that his grace was not disturbed by anybody but those his grace would wish to see, and asked:

"Praps yer grace might like to see the keerds at least."

"Let the cards lie till I am in a mood to look at them," said the duke crossly. "Bring me my tea and don't talk."

He had grown very testy and cross, more so than usual, since his last attack of gout; for the doctor had told him that his life depended on simplicity of diet; and the duke had always been a great lover of fine cookery and delicate meats, besides the taste in wines, of which he had always been so proud.

But, since his last attack, and especially since the assault of Spring-Heel Jack, the doctor had told him that the least inflammation might prove fatal at once, and that the least excess of diet would produce inflammation.

And since that date, the duke had been very anxious to live a little longer, if only for the gratification of several little spites which he had contracted within the last few days.

So he ate his toast—the doctor had not even allowed him a little butter on it, at night—and drank his cup of tea, not nearly as strong as he might have wished it, with the resignation of an anchorite in his cell, till the entrance of Jarvis;

and the hesitating way in which that trained servitor hung round, as if not quite sure what to do in the premises, caused the old duke to ask:

"Well, well, man, what is it? Don't stand there like a post, but tell me who has come."

Jarvis at once came forward and laid the silver salver before his master, with a card on it, which read:

"MR. OLIVER HOWARD."

The duke's face cleared up as if he was much pleased to see the card, and he said at once:

"That was right, Jarvis. I am glad to see that you have learned discretion, which is just what all the rest want in this house. My cousin Oliver is an exception to all rules, and I shall be glad to see him. Tell him to come into the library, and—Jarvis, tell Antoine to get up as nice and delicate a supper for one as if he were doing it for myself, and I were well again. But above all things, Jarvis, tell him to be sure and not put on more than enough for one; for, if he does, it may be the death of me, as I never could resist temptation. And—a—Jarvis, by-the-by, have the candles all lighted. Confound it man, I can't be groaned to death before my time, and I may as well have some fun, while the light holds out to burn. There, that is all. Go on and do it."

Jarvis, like a well-trained servant, waited till his master's orders were delivered, listening to every word, and then shot out of the room to obey them.

The old duke sat back in his large easy-chair, and waited for the opening of the door, with an expression of pleasure on his wrinkled old face. It was evident that he actually liked his young kinsman, who was coming to see him.

Presently the door opened, and Oliver Howard in his velvet coat and satin breeches, with black silk stockings on his very shapely legs, came into the room, bowing and smiling, as fresh as a young Adonis, which he resembled, in the air of health and vigor he carried in every movement.

The duke smiled and held out his hand, saying: "Well, young scapegrace, and what brings ye here to-night? Have ye been playing at hazard again, or is it that the wrong man won the fight, and ye can't pay your winnings?"

Oliver laughed as he came forward and took the extended hand.

"I did not come for money at all, this time, and your grace would hardly believe the real reason. I came to see if your grace had suffered much from the visit of the monster the other night."

The duke frowned and bit his lip.

"Ah, yes, by the by, that is true. But I did not think you would refer to that before me, boy."

"But I did not hear, till to-day," said the young man ingenuously, "that you had been hurt at all. I saw, from the news letter, that there was a story that the monster had been near you, but I did not credit it, in the least. To day I learned that you had been ill, and I came to see you at once."

"H'm!" said the duke dryly. "Who told you that I had been hurt?"

Oliver hesitated a moment and then said:

"My brother George, sir."

The old duke scowled at the words.

"Then, if your brother George knew I had been hurt, why the devil didn't he come up to ask after my health?" he cried, testily.

Oliver shrugged his shoulders.

"That is not for me to say. If your grace is anxious to see my brother, I can go and tell him the fact, and he will probably come here."

The duke impatiently shook his head.

"I don't want to see the jackanapes. How comes it that you are not in uniform to-night, Oliver?"

"Because I am not on duty, duke. I hate the uniform, and get it off at every opportunity I have."

"Well, boy, I am glad to see ye, and you shall have some dinner with me, Noll. Not that I can eat with ye, for the doctor will not allow me to know what is good for me, in these days, but to see thee eat, boy, and rejoice in thy youth. Hey, Oliver, boy? Can ye box, yet?"

Oliver laughed rather proudly.

"I had on the gloves, only last night, with White-Headed Bob, and he's the next best man to the champion."

"Ay, ay," said the duke, eagerly, "and what was the luck, boy? You don't mean to tell me that you could put up your hands with the second best man in England?"

"Ay, but I do, though," said Oliver, gayly. "I got the best of the round, as all said who were there, and Mr. Crib did me the honor to say that he had never seen an amateur, who took his milk so kindly."

The duke seemed to be much impressed with the praise that came from such a quarter; for the "Mr. Crib" mentioned was the champion of England.

"Well, upon my honor," he said, "boy, that was praise indeed, and if it were not for that infernal doctor I would insist on drinking his health, Oliver. But as it is, I must see you have your dinner, for it does me good to see ye eat. Reminds me of the days when I could eat

myself. Hey, boy? And how does go the duties at the palace?"

"About the same as usual, cousin. You heard that we had Spring-Heel Jack at Hampton Court, last night."

"I did, and was much astonished. Who can this man be, that sets all law at defiance, and yet makes his escape?"

Oliver laughed.

"They will never find out till I get at him," he said. "This fellow is a stout, active man, who can throw a back somerset as well as the next one, and he goes over hedges and ditches, when they straightway think it is a ghost. Bah, duke, George is too slow, ever to get his hands on Spring-Heel Jack."

The old duke smiled, as he said:

"If you think you could do any better, Master Oliver, I would that you had a trial, as I had."

Oliver seemed to be much interested in the matter, for he at once said:

"Will you not please tell me what was the way in which the monster appeared to you, duke?"

The duke shivered slightly at the reminiscence.

"I declare, Oliver, 'tis not so pleasant to recall, that same visit; for he treated me rather roughly; and, but for the coming up of Jarvis, I believe the scoundrel meant to kill me."

"Oh no. He couldn't have meant that," said Oliver hastily. "What ill-will could he have against you, duke?"

"Nay, that I can not say, boy; but this is certain, that the fellow has the strength of a giant. I used to be called a good man of my hands when I was a youngster, but this fellow caught me up as if he were a child, and held me over the river, as if he meant to drown me, when Jarvis came up in time to rescue me."

Oliver seemed to be more interested in the matter than before; for he continued to ask:

"And had you no glimpse of the creature, what it was like? Have you nothing that might be used as a clew?"

The old duke considered a little.

"Yes, Noll, now you speak of it, there was something that might be called a clew, if you like."

Noll started slightly and fixed his eyes on his old kinsman, with a set, eager look that would have attracted the other's attention, had it not been growing dark at the time. Jarvis was just coming in with the candles, and another flunky was following him closely, bearing a silver tray, on which smoked a most savory supper, according to the orders of the duke.

The sight took the thoughts of the old nobleman from what he was speaking of, and he pressed his kinsman to partake, saying:

"Never mind about the monster, Noll, till you have eaten and drank. Jarvis, bring up a magnum of the old port, that I laid down, twenty years ago. By all that's holy, the doctor can say what he likes, but I am going to drink to-night, and drown care."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DUKE'S WILL.

OLIVER HOWARD said nothing more about the monster till he had done honor to the viands that were set before him, with all the appetite of health and youth.

He had the gift of throwing off dull thought, and it was the gift that had made him so valuable to his kinsman.

He talked gayly and kept the duke in good humor, till nothing would do but the old man must take some of the wine, though the doctor had given his strictest orders against it.

It did not seem to do him any harm, but rather to make his spirits rise and his tongue flow faster, so that, in a little time after Oliver had come in, the old duke was toasting to his cousin's success at the boxing-match, and letting his conversation flow in the channel which had once earned him the name of the "Bad Howard."

Oliver did not seem to be shocked at the topics introduced by his cousin, but gave him as good as he sent, till at last the old duke clapped him on the back and cried out:

"By all the powers of Heaven, Noll, 'tis you should be the next duke, and George remain plain Mr. Howard!"

Oliver shrugged his shoulders.

"That is beyond the power of mortal man," he said. "The title of premier duke is the one thing in England which not all the powers of the owner can give away."

"But there is a good deal else that he can," interrupted the old duke, in a tone that was growing thicker as he drank more and more. "And let me tell ye, boy, there is that now in this room would make George stare if he knew it. It would frighten him famously."

Oliver cast a quick, suspicious glance at his cousin.

"I don't know there is anything in the room that could frighten any one, cousin. One would think that we were talking of Spring-Heel Jack."

The old duke made a disdainful gesture with his hand.

"Spring-Heel Jack is a fool, that can do no more than frighten women. He thought that he

could scare me; but he failed. Why, Oliver, man, if it had been a little lighter, I could have shot the scoundrel!"

Oliver laughed somewhat sneeringly.

"That is easy to say, but not so easy to do."

"Ay, ay, boy, but I told you that I had a clew to who he is."

"Ay," said Oliver, with more eagerness than he had hitherto shown. "And what was the clew?"

The duke assumed an air of mysterious gravity as he whispered:

"Noll, that is not to be said aloud. But I'll tell it, and mayhap you may be able to help find the scoundrel and earn a name for skill in tracking. I found one of the bullets I shot at him."

Oliver did not exhibit any further curiosity, for he said indifferently:

"Well, what of that? The bullet is not the man. Till he is found there is no use of making a fuss about bullets. The bullet that will kill Spring-Heel Jack is yet to be cast, cousin."

"Not so, Oliver. I said that I had found it. You can never guess where it was."

"Where?"

"In the garden walk in a place that showed it had dropped from something, and there was no trunk of a tree, or rock, or anything else, in the neighborhood that could have glanced it. No, Oliver, the man wore armor, and the ball flattened on him and dropped."

"And where is that a clew?" asked Oliver, with some uneasiness.

"In this, boy. The men who make armor in our days are few and far between. The armor that will flatten a pistol-bullet, sent from a barrel such as I had with me, and with a charge such as I had in it, is not easy to make. I have sent men out to find the name of every one that has had such made, and I expect the report to-morrow. Then Mr. Spring-Heel Jack will have to look out for himself. George catch him indeed! He has no more chance than of going to the moon. No, boy, it takes an older head than his, and if I be growing old, I can yet do something to show my brain as good as ever."

Oliver listened intently to what the old man said, and drew a long breath after he had finished.

"Well, cousin," he said, "you are quite as likely to take Spring-Heel Jack as George, for he thinks more of making love to old Reid's daughter, than of anything else in the wide world."

The duke caught at the words.

"Ay, ay, I know that; but I have put a spoke in that wheel, you may be sure."

"Indeed?"

Oliver's tone was one of perfect indifference; but a person who noticed him closely would have seen that his eyes were not more than half-open, and that he was glancing at the old duke from between the eyelids, in a singular, stealthy way.

"Yes," continued the duke, spitefully. "It is true that I have no power to control the succession to the title, but I have to the estates, and I have made a will which only requires to be signed, which will prevent that Reid from ever saying that he is father-in-law to the richest duke in England. I have not signed it yet, Noll; but I can, if at any time the pair of them is disposed to disobey my commands."

"Indeed, cousin," said Oliver, softly. "I cannot think that any brother of mine would be so lost to all sense of decency, that he would disregard the wishes of the head of his house; but, indeed, the girl is after him all the time, and I much fear that George will end in being her husband, no matter what any one may say to prevent him."

The duke listened sharply, and cast a suspicious glance at Oliver.

"It seems that she is not in your good graces then, Oliver?"

"In mine, cousin? Nay, but if there is a person in the world I dislike, it is that same pale-faced, lolling invalid they call Rose Reid. She is a fool, and has no sort of air about her. No, she is not in my good books, as you say."

"Then why in the deuce don't you tell her so, and try to shame her into leaving your brother?" asked the old duke suddenly. "The father seems to be a man of some pride, and I told him, this morning, that he could never hope to have his daughter married to George, and have both the title and money. But what do you think he told me when I said that?"

"I'm sure I don't know, cousin."

"Told me that he was rich enough to give his daughter a fortune, that would enable her to be as good a duchess as any one else. Oliver, between you and me, I am ashamed to sign that will, and yet I am tempted to do it."

"Why ashamed?" asked Oliver, slowly. "You have a right to do as you will with your own."

"Yes, that is true, very true, and the rascal has treated me with great disrespect. Do you know what he told me, Noll—I mean your brother George—when I told him that he must not think of marrying this girl, and that I would cut him off with a shilling if he did? What do you think he had the audacity to say to me?"

"I dare not think, sir."

"He told me that there would be one less mourner at my funeral," said the old duke in a

low tone, as if he did not like to refer to the subject which always made him shudder.

Oliver raised his hands in the air in pious horror, exclaiming:

"Great heavens, what insolence and ingratitude! When he owes all he is in the world to being a Howard; and you are the head of the house."

"Ay, ay, Noll," said the old nobleman, considerably mollified by the flattery. "It was a hard thing for me to hear, at my time of life, and that is not the worst of it; the old man, her father was still more insolent, and actually as good as turned me out of his rooms at the Tower, when I called on him, this morning."

"And all this you are going to suffer in silence," exclaimed Oliver, clasping his hands. "Great heavens, what magnanimity! I fear I could not be equal to such myself."

His words struck the old duke at once.

"Say you so, Oliver? Then, by heavens, I will sign it, and then let George look to himself. Call in Jarvis, and tell him to bring Hodge with him. Ring the bell."

Oliver obeyed at once, and the faithful Jarvis made his appearance, to whom the duke said:

"Open that desk in the corner of the room and bring me the paper that is in the top drawer."

The man obeyed, and then his master sent him off to call Hodge, who was a brother of the honest sergeant of the guard in the Tower.

The duke opened the paper, and said:

"I have called you in to witness my last will and testament, being yet in good health, but mindful of the uncertainty of life. You see I sign my name here."

He took a pen, handed him by the obsequious Oliver, and affixed his signature to the paper, after which he told the men where to sign, and they obeyed in silence.

"Now you can go," he said. "This is my next heir. That is all you need know. He will take care of you, after I am gone."

The men, looking much astonished, went out of the room, and the old duke cried:

"It is done, Noll, and I am glad of it, boy. Now let us have another bottle, and let the doctor say what he pleases."

He set into drinking at once, and when Oliver rose to depart, the duke was fast asleep in his chair, snoring in a way that would have frightened any doctor in the world.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOWARDS OF SELBY.

THE next morning after Oliver Howard's visit to his kinsman, he went back to Hampton Court, and the first person he saw was his brother, of whom he asked, with ill-concealed irony:

"Well, I suppose you have caught Spring-Heel Jack of course. You made such preparations, that he could not have disappointed you."

George favored his brother with a curious look, as he observed:

"No, this time you have been absent all night, and yet the scoundrel has not made his appearance. It is singular, but every time you have been away, he has come."

Oliver cast a look of anger at his brother, as he said, with a bitter sneer:

"Possibly you think I am the man."

"Oh, no," responded George; "I think nothing of the sort. If you were, I should have had you in irons long ago. Spring-Heel Jack may be a friend of yours, but you are not the man himself or you would have been found out."

Oliver seemed nettled by the remark.

"And how do you know? I might be he, and you none the wiser. For that matter, if I said I were the man himself, how could you prove it?"

George smiled provokingly.

"If ever I found out that you were the scamp who has played all these cowardly tricks I would give you such a hiding that you would not dare to think of playing the ghost again."

Oliver laughed aloud in scorn.

"So you think because I let you throw me yesterday that you can do what you like with me. You would find out your mistake if you once tried it."

George kept his coolness, as he replied:

"This is not the time, nor this the place for that sort of talk between us two, as long as we are reputed to be brothers—"

Oliver turned pale as the other spoke.

"What do you mean?" he asked furiously.

"Do you mean to say you doubt my birth?"

George looked at him steadily.

"You seem to be much moved at the idea. But what would you say if I did?"

"I would make you rue the word, for the rest of your life," said Oliver, in a low tone, coming close to George as he spoke. "It is a lie, and you know it. I know who has been putting these ideas into your head, but you'll find I am as good a Howard as you any day, if my face be as dark as yours is light. Do your worst, sir."

And he flung away from the young officer.

The excited youth went off immediately in search of Spring, the Gypsy, whom he found by his brother's quarters, in his capacity of orderly.

Straight to Spring went Oliver, and asked him eagerly:

"Have you been tattling or not?"

"About what?" asked the Gypsy.

He had a lowering look on his face as he spoke and showed little respect to the questioner, though there were soldiers in sight.

"Did you hear me speak?" asked Oliver fiercely, "or do you think that I am of one your pals? Why don't you salute me, when I speak to you?"

The Gypsy instantly straightened up and saluted as stiltily as any man could.

"Your honor axed me a question I didn't understand, and I axed your honor what it meant."

That was all he said, but there was a great deal of meaning in his eye, as he said it. His manner, to a person at a little distance, was as respectful as any other soldier of the guard; but the officer who faced him saw a mocking smile on his face, that belied the manner.

With an effort that was more like the self-restraint of his brother than his own natural reckless way, Oliver asked slowly:

"Have you been speaking to my brother about the stories that have been told as to my birth, or not? Answer the question plainly."

Spring saluted again.

"No, your honor; I haven't been talkin' to no brother of yourn, about nobody nor nothink."

The words seemed to be plain, but Oliver did not seem to be quite clear about it yet, for he went on:

"I mean, have you been speaking to Mr. Howard on the subject?"

"No, your honor, I ain't."

Again the answer was plain, but Oliver did not seem quite satisfied.

"Then what did he mean when he told me, this moment, that he suspected that I was not his brother?" asked Oliver sharply.

Spring shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Sure I don't know, your honor."

The young man turned away impatiently, and then came back.

"Look here, Spring," he said, in a different tone altogether. "This is not the way to treat me; is it? You know something, and you won't tell me what it is. Is that the way to treat me?"

Spring allowed the muscles of his face to relax into a smile.

"I thought your honor were comin' the officer over me, and that warn't the way to make a Romany speak, as ye know."

Then Oliver suddenly changed his language to one composed of soft vowels and linguals, in which he and the Gypsy conversed eagerly for a minute or more, till the approach of George Howard closed the conversation, and Oliver went away as if he did not want his brother to see him speaking to the Gypsy.

When George Howard came up, the Gypsy was hard at work on a belt of his master's, which he was industriously pipe-claying, and he did not lift his head till George asked:

"What was my brother saying to you, just now?"

Spring looked up, as innocently as a baby.

"Anan, your honor?" he said.

"I said, what was my brother speaking to you about, just now?"

Spring laughed below his breath.

"Deed, your honor, but it's comical. His honor is jest longin' to know whether we ketched Spring-Heel Jack, last night, or not? He jest wants to git the honor hisself, and he ain't goin' to git it, not by a jug-full."

"And was that all he said?" asked George, in his keenest way.

The Gypsy looked more innocent than ever.

"Well, if your honor wants me to remember his very words," he said, slowly, "I'll try, as nigh as I can, to give 'em. Says he to me, says he—as might be me was me, and that there belt was his honor—says he to me, says he, Spring, says he, if I could once lay my hands on that there Spring-Heel Jack, says he, I'd be content to lose a year's pay, says he. I'd be willin', says he."

"Oh, stop that 'says he,'" cried George, impatiently. "I want to know if that was all he said, and not a rigmarole about the exact words. Did he have nothing to say to you about what passed between us?"

"Twixt you and him, sir, or me and you, sir?" the Gypsy asked, imperturbably.

"Between him and me, of course. Nothing ever passed between you and me, except that licking I gave you, before you enlisted."

"Then he didn't say nothin' else, yer honor," said Spring, as civilly as ever.

George Howard turned away from the Gypsy, and went into his quarters, with a sense that there was something between Oliver and Spring that he did not understand.

When he had spoken to his brother in the way he had that morning he had but voiced the suspicions that had been gradually gathering in his mind, thanks to the whispers of others, for years past.

The father of the two boys had been a handsome, but dissipated and extravagant Indian officer, who had spent a large fortune deliberately in the knowledge that he was the next heir of the great title of Duke of Norfolk.

The old duke, who had earned the nickname of the "bad duke," had had no children, and his wife had died early, it was said, after a very unhappy life with him.

He had seemed careless as to how the title was to be perpetuated, and had often said, with a

laugh, when the subject was mentioned before him while he was still young:

"There is no need to worry about it. The title will not go begging, you may be sure, and there are enough Howards in England to make an army of themselves."

Captain Howard had thus been left to think all his life that he would ultimately succeed to the title and had reared his family in that impression.

George, who had been born first, had always been told that he would be the next Duke of Norfolk, and the idea had taken great hold of his mind as a child, leading him to a sense of dignity and reserve, which did not obtain in the case of his more impetuous and volatile brother, who was five years younger.

George had been away from his father's house, a child, on a visit to an uncle in Scotland, when Oliver was born, and there were not wanting gossips at that early day, who had told before the child mysterious things about "everything not being all right" as to the birth of the dark boy, who came, the first in many generations, into the family of the Howards of Selby—the branch to which Captain Howard belonged.

The boy had heard these rumors as a child, and they had made the impression on him that is made on a child by something that it does not quite understand.

When he saw his brother, which was not for some months after the child was born, little George eyed the black hair and dark eyes, so different from his own, with marked disfavor, and surprised everybody by saying to his mother:

"That's not my brother at all, and I don't want him for a brother."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RAM MANDANA'S VISIT.

THE speech of the child had created both anger and amusement in the family; but was attributed to spite and jealousy, by the familiar phrase of his "nose being out of joint," on account of the new baby in the house."

But as years went on, it was remarked, by all in the house, that there seemed to be a repulsion between the two brothers, which did not decrease with age, but rather grew stronger, as the boys grew to manhood; and the result was that they were sent to separate schools, to avoid the public scandal which would have inevitably been provoked by the spectacle of their constant quarrels and fights, in any place where they were found together.

When Captain Howard died, soon after his wife, both boys were of age, George being twenty-six, and Oliver twenty-one.

The spendthrift captain gave the last of his fortune in purchasing commissions for his two sons in the Guards, the most expensive corps in the army, and left them a thousand pounds apiece, and his blessing, when he died. The last part of the bequest might have been more valuable, had his conduct been better.

This had happened a year before, and, by the time that our story opens, both young men were beginning to be in straits for money, with the probability staring them in the face, that they would both have to sell their commissions before long, and go forth into the world, to make money, in some way.

George, being of a very cautious temperament, had not spent all his money yet, but Oliver had not only done this, but was over head and ears in debt, besides, and had borrowed of the Jews in the city, so often, that his notes were no longer to be discounted, since which he had been making a precarious living by the race-course, and the fascinating pursuit of "hazard," at which all London was then a proficient, as far as its money went.

Oliver had been "caster" and "setter," so often, that he had become a veteran in the game, and his only limitation in the way of making money therefrom was in the fact that none of his brother officers would play with him; and it was not always easy to find new men, who would stand unlimited hazard, when Oliver wanted to play it.

Nevertheless, the two had remained in the expensive corps to which they belonged, though it was only a question of a few months, as both knew, when they would be compelled to sell out to avoid disgrace and bankruptcy.

George was the most sensitive on this point, for Oliver did not seem to care where he obtained his money and goods, so long as he got them; and there were others among the young officers of the regiment that were almost as badly off as he, with nothing but their expectations to give them credit with the Jews, who then, as now and always, had the monopoly of the supply of young men of fashion, at exorbitant rates.

George had not fallen into their hands yet; but he had but a few pounds left besides his pay, and that was not enough to keep his mess-bill paid up, if he had wanted to be economical and live on the money he received from the Government.

This statement of the position of the two young men is necessary, to enable the reader to fully understand the feelings which animated them, and which caused the brothers to dislike each other to the point of hatred.

When George went to his quarters that day

he felt low in spirits, and began to think seriously over what he should do.

His money was nearly gone, and he had the additional anxiety that General Reid must soon find out how poor he was, and be inclined to turn him out of the place he occupied in the old officer's intimacy.

It was while he was thinking what to do, that he heard a tap at the door, and Spring put in his head to say:

"There's a gent wants to see your honor."

"Let him come in," said George, indifferently.

The door opened, and a tall, dark gentleman came in, and bowed to him, with a stately politeness that showed he came from good society.

The tall gentleman was very dark indeed, and had a keen, eagle-like face, that made George sure he must be a foreigner.

He was dressed in black velvet, as if in mourning, in the fashion of those days, and wore a sword, to show that he was a gentleman entitled to bear arms.

He had a cocked hat in his hand, and this he waved with a flourish, as he said, in a soft and very melodious voice:

"I did myself the honor to call to-day. My name is Ram Mandana."

George stared.

The name was a singular one, such as he had never heard before. The visitor remarked his air of astonishment, and added:

"I come from India. My name is not a familiar one to you, I perceive; but it is not more singular to you than your name would be in my country."

Then George remembered his politeness, and rose to hand his visitor a chair, as he said:

"Pardon me for appearing rude, but I had no such intention. I am glad to see you, sir, and hope that you will tell me to what I am indebted for the honor of this visit."

Ram Mandana took the proffered seat, and smiled as he answered:

"I have come to see you because I am interested in you. You have a strange history, although you do not know it yet."

"My history is, I fear, not so strange as it is common and unhappy," said George, gloomily.

"I am young and—"

"Poor," interrupted his visitor. "That is just it. You were thinking, when I came in, how you should be able to keep the wolf from the door."

George stared at his visitor.

"How did you know my thoughts?" he asked.

Ram Mandana smiled again.

"I know many things that would astonish you," he said, slowly. "For instance, I know that you have been hunting for a long time for a person who has been frightening all the good people in London, and you are no nearer than you were when you began to any discovery of the truth."

George looked earnestly at his visitor.

"Do you know anything about him, then?"

"That is not for me to say. But I can tell you that it is a matter of little importance to you to know. There are things of vastly more importance than that. One of them is *what you are, to-day.*"

George was puzzled at his tone.

"What I am, to-day?" he repeated. "What has that to do with Spring-Heel Jack? That is the mystery I am set on solving."

"And when you solve it, you will be sorry that you ever tried to do it," returned Ram Mandana, earnestly. "Young man, do you know who you are now, or not?"

"Who I am? Why, of course I do. I am George Howard, lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards."

Ram Mandana leaned forward to say:

"You are wrong. You are the Duke of Norfolk. The old duke died this morning, not half an hour ago, and the title is yours."

George started violently.

"How do you know this?" he cried.

Ram Mandana answered:

"Because I saw his dead face. He lies in his chair, in the library, and there is no one in the room yet. His servants think him asleep, and do not dare to disturb him."

"Then how did you get in to see him?"

He asked the question, not knowing what else to say, and strongly believing that his visitor was a maniac.

Ram Mandana smiled, and said, as if he were answering the thoughts in the mind of the young man, unuttered as they were:

"You are mistaken. I am not mad. If you will go there, you will see what I have said. I came to tell you the news, and to warn you that it will do you no good."

"What do you mean?" again asked George.

"I mean that the duke, last night, signed a will by which he left his property to your brother, so that you cannot take up the title, unless you are content to be known as the 'pauper duke,' or marry an heiress, who will wed you for the sake of being called a duchess," said Ram Mandana, in the most common-place way in the world, as if he were telling an ordinary piece of news, at which no one need be surprised.

But George was not only surprised, but incredulous and he said so.

"It is impossible," he said, "that a person who is an entire stranger to me and my family, can know so much as you pretend, sir."

Ram Mandana waved his hand gravely.

"I came here on an errand of friendship to you, young man," he said. "Do not turn my feeling into dislike, and compel me to leave you."

George was struck by the tone he used, and his heart smote him for having been rude.

"I had no intention of being uncivil, sir," he said, "but you must confess that your news is so strange, and that the fact of your being an entire stranger to me makes the communication so extraordinary, not to say suspicious—"

"That, in short, you are inclined to believe that I am telling a falsehood," said Ram Mandana, eying him mildly, and with no visible sign of ill-temper.

George hesitated.

"Nay, hardly that, but I find it hard to believe but what you may be mistaken," he said.

"Young man," said the Hindoo gravely, "I am never mistaken, when I tell you I have seen a thing. Listen. You have never been in India, or you would know that there are adepts there, who can leave the body, after a long probation, and penetrate the secrets of the universe. I am of that privileged order. Listen again. A few days ago, men came to me, in the style of the overfed Briton who lords it over India, to find out for them who it was that was terrifying the people of this city. I knew nothing of the man, and told them so, but they insisted that I must, and I had to turn them out of my house at last. When they were gone, their question remained with me, and I resolved to find out for myself who was this person, that has so long defied the police and the soldiers, and every one who has come after him. I went to my chamber.

In the course of my studies, I found that you were closely intertwined with this man, and that the Duke of Norfolk was also implicated with him. Then I thought I would go and see the Duke himself, and ask him what was the reason of this. I went at once, and came into his chamber, without asking his servants."

"But how did you get there?" asked George in a stupor of amazement. "The men would never let you in, without all sorts of formalities."

Ram Mandana waved his hand.

"I went there without their seeing me. No matter how. Enough that I did it. I found the duke dead in his chair, as I tell you, and if you wish to secure the will of which I spoke, and be the duke in fact, as well as name, you will find it in the drawer of the desk, that stands by the side of the dead body."

George Howard stared at Ram Mandana, incredulously.

"I cannot believe but I must be dreaming. Are you sure of what you say?"

"I have told you, and if you do not choose to take advantage of what I intrust to you, so as to defeat the plot that has been made to deprive you of your inheritance, it will prove that you are not worthy to be the duke," said the Hindoo quietly. "Look out of that window, and tell me if that is not your brother that is coming hither?"

George turned to the window to look out.

"No," he said, turning round.

And then to his unutterable amazement Ram Mandana was gone!

CHAPTER XXV. THE BEGGAR DUKE.

THE Hindoo had vanished into thin air, or had stolen from the room, with such marvelous silence and celerity, that he had not heard him, in the two seconds that it had taken him to turn to the window, and back again.

Determined to ascertain whether he had been cheated by some cunning mountebank trick, the young officer rushed out of the room, and called hastily to Spring:

"Which way did that gentleman go?"

The Gypsy stared at him.

"Gentleman, your honor? There ain't no gentleman come out, saving and excepting your honor."

"No, no, I mean the dark man that you sent in just now," said George impatiently.

Spring assumed an expression of absolute fear.

"Why, ain't he in there still?" he asked.

"No, he has disappeared. You must have seen him pass you. Which way did he come?"

Spring lifted up his hand to heaven solemnly.

"There ain't been nobody by my post, I can take my oath, your honor. If the gent went out of your sight, he must be in there still."

Then George went back and searched the little lodge in which he had his quarters, with the result that there was no trace of the visitor to be found, and he reluctantly came to the conclusion that Ram Mandana was actually gone.

The occurrence startled him more than anything else could have done. For the first time, he remembered what the visitor had told him about the death of the old duke, and he resolved to test the story.

He ordered his horse; rode to London at once, and drew rein at the house he had visited once before.

Everything looked the same as ever, and Jar-

vis opened the door, recognizing him with more respect than he had shown him at his last visit.

"Is the duke at home?" asked George.

"Is grace his at 'ome, sir—leastwise 'is grace ain't up yet."

"Did he sleep in the library?" asked the visitor hastily.

Jarvis stared at him, as if surprised.

"Yes, sir—that is—how did you know it?"

"Never mind how I know it," replied George.

"I am his next of kin, and am going to the library at once. I know the way."

And before the startled flunky could stop him, he had passed along the broad hall, and laid his hand on the door of the library.

Jarvis followed him, crying, in a whisper of great agitation:

"For God's sake, sir, don't go hin. 'Is grace 'll send bevery man in the 'ouse a-jackin' if 'e's disturbed, afore 'e rings."

But George put him aside, and entered the room. The moment he got there, he saw the old duke, in his chair, as upright as if he was alive; but the whiteness of his face and the drop of the jaw showed that Ram Mandana had told the truth.

The premier duke of England was dead. The debauch of the previous night had been too much for him. He had defied the doctor's orders and a stroke of apoplexy had taken him from the midst of all his wealth.

Jarvis saw the dead face too, and at once took in the whole situation.

In common with all the servants, he had known that George was the next heir to the dukedom, and, with all the servile instinct of the true British flunky, he said:

"Oh, your grace, 'oo would 'a' thought it! It's a massy your grace come when you did; for the poor old gentleman made 'is will, last night."

George, more startled at the news, which confirmed what his mysterious visitor had told him, looked round the room, and saw the very desk at which he had been warned, standing by the dead man.

"Go at once and summon the coroner," he said, in a low tone; and as Jarvis left the room, anxious to curry favor with the new duke, the young man cast a swift glance round, and went straight to the drawer he had been told of, by the Hindoo.

It was the work of a moment to open it, and he saw a parchment, lying on the top of a number of other papers, indorsed:

"My last Will and Testament. NORFOLK."

He trembled all over with excitement. The temptation was terrible. If Ram Mandana had told him the truth in one thing, he must have done it in all, and the Hindoo had told him that the will left all the property in the hands of the man called his brother.

Hardly knowing what he did, he opened the paper, and the first words stared him in the face:

"To my beloved kinsman, Oliver Howard, commonly said to be the son of George Augustus Howard, of Selby."

Then came a clause, which told how the old man, who had well earned the name of the "bad duke," in his misspent life, had hesitated for many years whether he should do what he finally did.

He had intended to leave the boy a portion of his wealth, the rest to go to the title, but the will closed with these words:

"But inasmuch as my next heir, according to law, has insulted me, by saying that he would not be a mourner at my funeral, I hereby take from him all that I can, and charge Oliver, that he see George Howard is not admitted to my funeral."

The will was signed and witnessed, and the date attached showed that it had been executed only the previous night.

He had hardly finished the perusal of the will, when he heard steps at the door, and the next moment Oliver Howard rushed into the room, his dark face flushed with anger.

"Aha!" he cried, as he saw George. "So you are there, are you, trying to steal the will that makes all things even between us? But you cannot do it now, sir. Give me the will."

And, as he spoke, he laid his hand on his sword, and half drew it.

George Howard stood there, facing the man he had always felt could not be his brother, but not knowing exactly how to act.

His voice trembled as he said:

"I was but reading it, Oliver. I give it up cheerfully to you. You have the luck of it at last; but had I known this before, you might not have had so much reason to hate me."

Oliver made no answer till he had the will safe in his hands, when he folded it carefully and put it in his breast.

Then he said, with an elaborate sneer:

"You are the new Duke of Norfolk, and entitled to be called your grace; but this house and all in it belongs to me, sir."

The new duke bowed low.

"It is true," he said. "I am sorry to have intruded. I wish you a good-morning, sir, and a happy enjoyment of your wealth."

Then George Howard, Duke of Norfolk and a beggar, at one and the same time, went slowly out from the house in which he had expected to

be the undisputed master, while the other, with a low, evil laugh, clapped his hand on the paper in his breast, and said to himself:

"At last we are even, proud *gorgio*."
And he spoke in the Gypsy tongue.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE KING'S OFFER.

THE excitement and scandal in London, when the news spread of the death of the old Duke of Norfolk, and the fact that the new duke was an actual beggar, were immense.

Had there been any way of upsetting the will, the sympathy of the entire nobility would have gone with George in his efforts to break it; but the new duke, when he was approached on the subject, by one eminent lawyer, who wanted the chance of a great suit on a fat estate, absolutely refused to have anything to do with a contest.

"No," he said, when he was advised to do his utmost, as a 'duty to his order,' "the duke had a right to do what he would with his own, and I am not the man to try and rob my brother."

Then the lawyer remarked that "it was by no means certain that Oliver was his brother at all," and called attention to the peculiar way in which the will spoke of him as "commonly called the son of George Augustus Howard, of Selby."

"It is quite likely," said the lawyer, "that the late duke knew more of the family than you think. It has been a matter of common notoriety that you are very unlike Oliver Howard, and there are not wanting those who insinuate that there was something wrong about the time when he was born."

But George refused to have anything to do with casting a public doubt on his family, and told the lawyer:

"I never felt that he was my brother; and had things been different from what they are, I might have kept on thinking so; but this changes all. The duke must have known who he was, or he would not have left him all his fortune. If I were to dispute it now, people would say that I did it out of revenge. The Howards of Selby are not the men to creep in at a hole, if they cannot walk in at the open door of the house."

So the old Duke of Norfolk was buried in the parish church of Arundel Castle, and the new duke went about his business, an anomaly among all the nobles of England, as the "beggar duke."

The king himself was pleased to say publicly that: if his grace chose to enter a protest in the courts against the extraordinary will, by which the bad duke had disgraced his own order so publicly, his majesty would order a special rule in the courts, which would put the property where it had always been, in possession of the title."

The king had been heard to say this, on the very next day after the funeral, when the will of the late duke had been made public, and his majesty had said it at Hampton Court, when he was taking his usual evening walk.

He said it in the hearing of Rose Reid, among others, for she was in the garden with Lady Balcarras, with whom she had been staying ever since the day when her father told her that she must "give up George forever."

Since that day she had not seen George, the visit of Ram Mandana and the scandal of the duke's will having taken place on the same morning.

What the accusation against George had been, which had induced the sudden change of her father's determination, the poor girl did not know, nor did the general offer her any more information on the subject than that "he had heard reports from Lady Balcarras that rendered it impossible that she should ever have any further intercourse with her lover."

In those days parents and children in England stood on a very different footing from what they have done since and elsewhere. Passive obedience was preached in every church and at every fireside, and the children were taught that they should be guided by their parents in every matter, however their own inclinations were concerned.

Rose Reid had been brought up in the strictest of this school, and believed implicitly in the wisdom of her father.

When he told her that she must give up

this young man she turned very pale, but only said:

"As you please, father."

There was a great fluttering at her heart, but she suppressed all outward sign thereof, and the old general went away to the Tower with the sad face of his daughter haunting him, but with no fear that she would disobey him.

Rose was very silent, but, when Lady Balcarras asked her to go out in the garden, she said listlessly:

"As well there as anywhere."

The garden was full of people, that evening after the funeral, for the day had been hot, and the change was agreeable. The king was unusually gracious, and the people were full of the new scandal, which was discussed by every one in Rose's hearing, with no knowledge that she had any connection with the new duke, who had been left in so singular a position.

When Rose heard the king say what he did she flushed deeply, and Lady Balcarras felt the arm which rested on her own tremble.

The old lady cast a glance of warning at her charge and whispered:

"Take care, child. Nobody knows now; but they are quick to notice things at court."

Rose was very pale, but she managed to whisper back to her chaperon:

"Have no fears. No one shall know from me."

Then some one said aloud:

"They say that the new duke is actually an officer of the guards in this place."

The person who had spoken was near the king, and his majesty turned in his usual way.

"Eh, what's that? what's that? Who said that? Who is he? Where is he?"

The speaker was Lord Balcarras, who had an office near the king, and he said at once:

"Please, your majesty, it is only what I have heard, that the new duke was on guard in this palace only yesterday morning, and that it was he who met Spring-Heel Jack in the gardens here, and nearly caught the ruffian."

"Eh, eh, that's very strange," said the king in his jerky way. "Where is he now, and where is the brother that has had such good luck?"

"Mr. Oliver Howard was on guard here," said Lord Balcarras, "but I hear that, the moment the will was read, he resigned his commission in the regiment, and has taken up his abode in Norfolk House. But the new duke has retained his place, and, so I am informed by the commandant, he is actually to be on guard here again to-night."

And, just as the speaker finished, the people near the king heard the regular tramp of the relief, and saw the gleam of bayonets in the sunset, as the men filed on their way to their different posts.

The king seemed to be much moved at the words of his old servant.

"Why, why, this is very singular," he said. "It won't do at all to have the premier duke of England standing guard like a mere private gentleman, who has nothing but his sword to maintain him. Lord Balcarras, go and tell him that I wish to see him at once."

Lady Balcarras felt the arm of Rose Reid, as it lay on her own, tremble more than ever, and gave it a warning pinch; but the old lord had gone at once on his errand, and the king, by keeping on, talking warmly of the "shameful way in which the new duke had been treated," saved Rose from being noticed by any of the sharp-eyed courtiers.

In a little while after, the old lord was seen coming back, with a tall young officer, in full uniform, and this person he formally took to the king, saying:

"The Duke of Norfolk, your majesty."

The king looked on the young man with much interest as he stood there, and the eyes of the courtiers followed those of the monarch with equal interest.

It was not every day that people could see such a sight as that—a duke and a beggar.

"Well, well, duke, this is a strange affair," the king began, kindly. "I have heard all about it, and on my soul, sir, it is an outrage and ought to be remedied. Such a thing was never heard of before. The estate should have been entailed so that no such scandal could have happened. As it is, the infamous

will can be upset. I am sure of that, perfectly sure. What are you going to do to remedy the wrong?"

"Nothing, your majesty," was the quiet reply. "It is not for me to rob my brother, when he has had better luck than my own. The only thing that can be done, is for me to drop the title I have not the means to maintain, and let the Duchy of Norfolk perish, as other duchies have gone down in English history before."

"But it shall not be," the king said obstinately. "It is unheard of. I must make up for it in some way, if the courts will not give you justice. The office of a duke has its duties as well as its privileges; and the old duke had no right to put the next heir in such a position as he has. You must take office, if there is no way else to make things right. There are many places where the salary is good, though not enough to make the show the first duke in England should do. In the mean time, you must not go on guard any more. It is a scandal to the realm, and must not be allowed. I insist on it that you do not perform any more guard duty."

The beggar duke bowed low.

"Your majesty must be obeyed; but I may venture to represent that it is no disgrace to any noble in the land to guard the sacred person of your majesty against foes, without or within."

The king could not help smiling at the flattery, so well was it worded.

George pursued, seeing that the king made no answer:

"Besides, there is a man, or monster, no one yet knows which, that has frightened your majesty's subjects nigh to death, especially ladies. This scoundrel, whoever he is, has been daring enough to penetrate into the very recesses of this palace, and I wish to have the honor of hunting him down. Your majesty can do me no more disfavor than to forbid me to pursue this search."

"Oh, well, well, if that is all you want, there is no harm in that," said the king hastily. "But you must not be known as the mere lieutenant that you seem to be now. I shall appoint you the commandant of all my guard, with a special office, and a salary out of the privy purse, if you are too proud to take anything else. In the mean time, duke, what suspicion have you, as to whether this audacious ruffian will come here again to-night?"

"I have no such idea," replied the beggar duke quietly. "But, if your majesty should hear, in the morning, that he *had* come, and that no one was ready for him, it would be a reflection on *me*; so that the least I can do is to take what precautions I can to prevent such a thing."

"Very well said; very well said," observed the king; in his jerky way. "Well, well, do what you will, sir, do what you will, and in the morning come straight to me, and report what has been done. Good-evening."

So saying, the eccentric monarch turned on his heel, and went off, while the courtiers, who had witnessed the peculiar favor in which the new duke was held, and who saw that, if he wished, anything, legal or the reverse, would be done to make him as rich as he was noble, crowded round George, and began to flatter him in every way.

But, to their surprise, the new duke seemed to set but little value on their fine speeches, and turned from them all to Lady Balcarras, who was nearly the lowest in rank there, to make the lady a compliment, and ask after her health.

And, still more to the surprise of the courtiers, Lady Balcarras actually spoke with the most freezing coldness to the new duke, and the young lady by her side seemed to be overwhelmed with confusion when he spoke to her, answered him in monosyllables, and took her departure with the old lady, with hardly the ceremony of a farewell.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ADEPT'S ADVICE.

GEORGE HOWARD, as we must continue to call him, till he occupies a less equivocal position, was too much astonished at the reception he had experienced from the Scotch peeress, to be able to ask her anything, before she went away to her pavilion, with Rose.

He took no notice of the affront in public,

though all the courtiers had seen it, and had begun to whisper together about it.

He excused himself from the group, on the ground that he had to see to his guard, and went the round of the sentries, seeing that they were on the alert, and had their guns loaded, for the possible visit of the monster that had alarmed the palace once before.

Then he went to the simple quarters he occupied when he first came to the palace, and sat down to reflect on his singular fate.

It seemed as if the very mockery of misfortune had come on him. Had he been simple George Howard and a beggar, it would have been no more than he had been expecting; but to have the first title in England thrust on him, with the knowledge that he could never assume it in public, without humiliation, was a bitter thing for him to bear.

He could think of no way in which the humiliation could be avoided. The law had made him what he was, and that could not be undone. Then the thought of the way in which Lady Balcarras and Rose had just treated him came to him, and he groaned to himself, as he leaned his head on his hand:

"I might have known it. They all turn against me. The unfortunate have no friends, and surely I am unfortunate enough."

"There is no misfortune that a brave man can not turn to good," said a voice close behind him, and the young officer, with a violent start, turned round, and saw the Hindoo adept, who had come to visit him in such a mysterious way once before, seated on a chair close by him.

Ram Mandana looked at him as calmly as if his coming had been the most commonplace thing in the world.

George had been quite alone in his quarters. The room in which he was sitting was in a remote part of the palace, and only to be approached by coming through several others; but there was Ram Mandana, looking at him, with his mild eyes and grave, solemn face.

How had he got there?

The thought was in his mind, but unuttered, when Ram Mandana said, just as if he had asked the question audibly:

"It is no use to ask. I am here. Let that suffice. If I had not felt friendly toward you, I should not have come."

George gazed at him with wonder.

"Strange, mysterious man that you are!" he exclaimed; "what gives you an interest in me, and what power is it that enables you to appear to me, when and where you please?"

Ram Mandana smiled.

"I have told you once, that it is useless to ask that of me. I came to aid you once before, but you would not be aided. I told you that the will which did you an injustice was in a place where you could have laid hands on it; and yet you allowed another to take it from you, and rob you of your rights. Why did you do such a thing?"

George colored slightly.

"Since you are able to read my thoughts, you ought to be able to tell that yourself," he said rather stiffly.

He remarked that Ram Mandana no longer wore the dress of a gentleman of the time, in which he had made his appearance before.

The Hindoo was attired in a long Oriental robe, of some dark, rich stuff, that looked like a Cashmere shawl, and was girt round the waist with a heavy cord of gold.

He remarked, further, that there was something hazy and undefined about the whole figure, in the dim light of the room, that reminded him of the stories he had heard of ghosts. He almost thought that his visitor must be a ghost, from the way he had come.

Ram Mandana bowed his head slowly at the remark he made, and answered:

"It is true that I am able to read the thoughts of men, when I can see them, face to face, and inspect their inward parts; but I was not there when you did that foolish thing. Therefore I ask you, wherefore you let the prize that was in your hands escape?"

George drew himself up.

"The reason I gave up the will to my brother was that I knew the old duke had a right to do what he would with his own; and it was not for me to commit a dishonorable action, to enrich myself."

"The reason was a good one, according to your English notions of honor—I think that is what you call it," began the Hindoo gravely, when George interrupted:

"And what should you call it?"

The Hindoo smiled.

"I should call it—but never mind what. Let me tell you the story first."

Then he went on in the same quiet, unimpassioned way as before:

"There was once a king reigned in my country who was a great warrior in his day; but, as he grew old he lost his senses and became as a beast of the field. His lawful heir was a young prince, who had the love of all the people, and he was a great warrior. But he had an enemy in the palace, who took the old king, when he saw that he had lost his senses, and breathed lies into his ears, till the king, being in his dotage, gave away to the bad man who had his ear, all his kingdom. And when the old king died, and the people thought that they would have for king one who could lead them to battle, they found that they were given in his place a thief, who had stolen what did not belong to him. And the people rose up and said that the thief should not reign over them, and they killed him, and took the young prince, who was the rightful heir, to be in his place. That is the way they do things in my country; but, in yours, it seems the people are such fools they do not know what to do, while the young prince has not courage enough to do it for them."

George had been growing red while the other spoke; but he rejoined sharply:

"Your story is at fault. This is no matter of a kingdom, but an estate; and, had I destroyed the will, as you insinuate I should have done, I should have been liable to have been scouted as a dishonorable man for the rest of my days."

"Whereas, now you will be called a fool," was the concise reply of the Hindoo, at which the young officer colored more deeply than before, as he retorted:

"I would rather be called a fool than a knave, any day; and this country is not India."

Ram Mandana shrugged his shoulders.

"You are incorrigible," he said quietly; "but you will come to your senses some day. You have for a long time suspected that the man, called your brother, is no relation to you, and yet you have let him rob you of your inheritance."

"It is true that I thought so once," said the beggar duke, flushing again; "but I am convinced that I must have done him a wrong. After all, I have no evidence save the fact that we are not like each other in face or feature; but the old duke, my kinsman, must have known, and he would never have given away the estates to one not of our blood. In the end they must go with the title to the same man. I am but one, and it is better that I should give way."

Ram Mandana eyed him with an air as if he had been some strange animal.

"I have heard, Mr. Howard," he said, "that there are lunatics among you Englishmen, on account of the fogs that envelop your island for so many months in the year; but I never expected to find the story corroborated. The old duke, as you ought to know, was a bad man, who would stick at nothing to have his revenge, and you had insulted him once. The keenest revenge he could take was what he has taken. He knew well enough that nothing could sting you, like being a pauper and a duke, at the same time. But he also had his revenge to get on others, and especially on the nobles of the court that he disliked most. What revenge could there be, like that of, one day, having a nameless man, come out of a wayside ditch, put over them all?"

George stared at him.

"I fail to understand you," he said.

"I do not hope that you will understand all I say. But remember this. *Within three days more, the titles and estates of the Duke of Norfolk will come into the same man*; and it depends on you who the man shall be. Who is that coming in at the door?"

George turned to see, and, beholding nothing, turned again to his guest, when Ram Mandana had vanished, as if he had never existed!

Full of wonder and awe at the mysteries that seemed to surround him, the young duke

hastily caught up a lamp and searched the premises, to discover the way his visitor had escaped.

There was not a trace that any one had been there at all, and George came to the reluctant conclusion that he must have been dreaming.

To clear his brain of the whirling ideas that filled it, he went out into the garden, to visit the posts of the sentries.

He found that all had been quiet, and that the clocks had just struck eleven. The new guard went on at midnight, and he retired to his room to wait for the hour. There was a strange sense of uneasiness about him as he came forth again, and found the new relief going on. The night was darker than usual, and a heavy thunder-cloud hung over the palace.

As the clocks rung out the stroke of twelve, he heard a shot, at the other extremity of the palace garden.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALARMS.

THE shot came from a lonely post, not far from the river, where the grounds of the palace join the expanse of Bushey Park.

The report startled the soldiers who were parading for the guard, and there was a slight movement in the ranks, which their officer checked with the stern order:

"Steady there! Right face! Forward, at the double-quick, march!"

Then the whole guard started out at a slow run toward the place where they had heard the shot, George running ahead of them, and peering eagerly through the darkness, in hopes of seeing something.

But when a second shot came to enliven the monotony, the trot became a run, and the whole of the soldiers dashed on, muskets clutched tightly, their eyes searching the darkness, ready to fire at anything they might see.

The men were excited and angry, for they had been teased most unmercifully about the ghost that had scared them all, and they were anxious to make up for the disgrace.

They traversed the grounds hastily, and, as they came to the place whence the shot had proceeded, they saw a third flash, and distinguished, by the light, the figure of one of the sentries, who had his musket at his shoulder, and was firing right out toward Bushey Park.

What he was firing at, remained a mystery till they got near him, when Howard, who saw nothing, called out angrily:

"What are you firing at, sentry?"

The answer came in an unexpected form, for the man shouted out:

"Halt or I fire! Who goes there?"

It was evident that he had not recognized the voice of his officer, or was determined to take all the privilege of a sentry at night, by pretending not to know it.

"Who goes there?" he called out again, as the sergeant of the guard gave the order to halt.

The reply was given:

"Relief!"

"Halt, relief! Advance one, with the countersign!" cried the sentry; and the sergeant went forward, and, after a short colloquy with the man, called out angrily:

"Advance, relief! Only a confounded recruit, scared at nothing."

Howard, who had remained behind with the guard, went forward here and asked:

"Who is this man that is alarming the place by firing at nothing?"

And then, when the sergeant flashed the light of his dark-lantern on the delinquent sentry, he was surprised to see the dark face, and black, gleaming eyes of the Gypsy Spring, whom he thought safe in his rooms, as his orderly.

"What do you mean by being here, Spring?" he demanded angrily.

Spring saluted.

"One of the men was sick, your honor, and the sergeant took me out of my bed to take his place. I ain't never stood guard in no sich place as this afore; and there's things goin' on 'ere, that ain't what they ought to be."

"What did you fire at?" asked George.

He felt very angry with the man, and yet did not want to treat him with injustice, if he had seen anything.

"I don't know what I fired at; but I know

it couldn't ha' been nothin' nateral," said the Gypsy sullenly. "First thing I knowed, I 'eard 'im, a-comin' this way, and I 'ollered to 'im to 'alt, and 'e didn't 'alt, so I ups and lets 'im 'ave it. And then 'e goes hup in a flame of fire, for all the world like a flash of lightnin', yer honor; and that's all I knows of it."

The description was that of the mysterious being that had puzzled them so long; and George asked eagerly:

"Which way did it go?"

Spring was in the act of pointing over toward Bushey Park, when a blinding flash of real lightning made everything round them as clear as day, and it was almost instantly followed by a clap of thunder that seemed to shake the earth.

Then down came the rain in torrents, and the darkness became intense, in the midst of which they heard a shout for help, not far off, in the tones of one of the soldiers.

The next moment, out of the darkness in the direction they had heard the shout, came the well-remembered figure of Spring-Heel Jack, in a flame of fire, running and leaping in the way the figure had always been seen before, and from which it had acquired the name it bore.

It was running swiftly across their path into the recesses of Bushey Park, and George hastily cried out:

"Fire at him! Ten pounds to the man that brings him down!"

Then came an irregular volley from the men, in the midst of which the figure vanished into the darkness. The rain, lightning and thunder, became so fierce that pursuit was out of the question, and they could only let the disturber go, satisfied that he had done no damage this time, so far as they knew.

Howard went back to his humble quarters, wet to the skin, and was about to enter them when it occurred to him to take a look round the pavilion, where the Balcarras family and Rose resided.

He went that way in the darkness and tempest, and had arrived just under the window from which he had last seen Rose, when, to his intense astonishment and incredulous amazement, up from the ground, beneath the window, started the ill-omened figure of the monster and flashed a flame of fire in his face.

But this time the young officer was prepared for the intruder.

He ducked his head to avoid the flame the other cast at him and dashed forward, clutching at the figure, without time to draw his sword.

The next moment Spring-Heel Jack and he were close grappled together.

It was a man that he had hold of, and he was both strong and active, beyond the common.

Howard was strong and a good wrestler; but he found that he had met his match at last; for the other twined like an eel in his arms, and wrestled with the fury of despair.

After the first flame that he had sent into his assailant's face, he seemed to be incapable of further mischief in that way; but he made such a tremendous struggle, that George could not get on him the grip that he was trying for, while the other had gradually got his hands up, and grasped George round the throat.

In the silence and darkness—for the guard was nowhere near, and the young officer disdained to call for help—the two struggled together like madmen.

Then George felt something like a knife, cutting at the side of his throat, and in the instinct of pain he let go his hold for an instant.

He tried to guard himself from further harm by drawing back and delivering a blow with all his force, at the face of the foe he had met.

But, in the instant that he let go, the other did the same, and fled like a deer in the darkness and rain.

George pursued for a few steps, and then saw the futility of what he was doing. He stopped and heard the retreating footsteps, rapidly growing fainter and fainter.

Then he began to feel dizzy, and fell down by the wall of the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MORE MYSTERIES.

THE injury that Howard had received was not severe enough to deprive him entirely of his senses; but his head swam and he felt so weak that he could not stand on his feet.

As he sunk at the side of the house, he heard nothing but the retreating footsteps of the mysterious visitor, and the patter of the rain on the gravel walk.

The soldiers had gone to their posts, and the struggle in which he had been engaged had been conducted so silently that no one had noticed it, as far as he could know.

There he was, by the side of the brick wall, under the window from which he had seen Rose last, and he felt the blood dripping from a wound in his neck, how severe he knew not.

If Spring-Heel Jack should come back, he reflected, he would not be able to defend himself; for he began to think he was severely hurt, perhaps fatally.

He disdained to call for help, and lay there at the side of the house, in the drenching rain, till he began to feel his weakness passing away.

Then he rose slowly, supporting himself by the side of the house and tried to walk away.

The first step made him stagger, and he nearly fell again.

A second rest and a second attempt enabled him to get up and slowly walk away to his quarters, where he arrived and staggered in, finding the lamp he had left on the table still burning, while the shower that had come down, so opportunely for Spring-Heel Jack, was passing away to the south, and the stars were shining through the rifts in the dark clouds.

It was all the young officer could do to get to a chair and throw himself down, without fainting outright; but, after a little rest, he felt better and was able to examine himself by the light of the lamp, and find just how much he had been hurt.

A long gash had been made at the side of his neck, close to the jugular vein, and the blood had run down, soaking his uniform; but on the cut itself it was already drying, and he thought that the worst was over.

It occurred to him that it was strange that his orderly Spring had been taken by the sergeant of the guard for duty, and he went to the room where he had left Spring asleep, before he went out.

There, to his great astonishment, he saw the Gypsy himself, stretched out on his rude pallet, fast asleep.

George stirred him, and Spring woke up instantly, without rubbing his eyes.

He sat up on his pallet, and asked respectfully:

"Does your honor want anything of me?"

And he saluted as he spoke.

"Yes," was the reply; "how did you come out of here, and go on post?"

Spring looked bewildered, and got out of bed, to stand before his officer and salute again.

"Your honor is pleased to 'ave a little fun," he said slowly. "I ain't been out of bed since your honor sent me there. Leastwise, not to my knowledge, that is."

George looked at the Gypsy, who returned the gaze with perfect calmness.

"Do you mean to say that you were not on post by the edge of Bushey Park, and that you did not fire at something, and, after that, tell me that the sergeant had taken you from your bed, and made you stand guard?"

The tone in which George asked the question showed that he was angry; but he was too weak to indulge it, as he would have otherwise.

But Spring answered steadily:

"Not to my knowledge, your honor, I ain't done nothin' of the sort."

George bit his lips.

"Very well, then, go and find the doctor at once, and tell him that I have had a cut, and need his help."

Spring at once began to throw on his clothes with great haste, and George went back to the table by which he had been sitting, and thought over what motive the Gypsy could have to tell the audacious lie to which he had just given utterance.

Before he could settle it in his mind, Spring came out, and, as he passed, George said faintly:

"Go quick. I am hurt."

Then he was left alone, and the sight of a bottle of wine on the table, where it had been left since his dinner, reminded him that he was still very weak, and that a little might revive him for awhile.

With a trembling hand he poured out a glassful and swallowed it, feeling almost instantly revived and invigorated.

By the time he had become more composed, the step of the doctor was heard on the walk outside, and Tatham entered the room, saying, in his jolly way, as he came in:

"Well, well, and what has happened now to my most noble duke?"

His face grew graver as he saw the paleness of the young officer, and he examined the wound in silence.

When he had finished the examination he said:

"You won't die this time; but a little more and the jugular vein would have been cut, and it would have been all up with you. As it is, you have had a narrow escape, but the wound is a trifle, except for the loss of blood."

"It makes me feel weak enough," said Howard, rather ruefully.

"That is because you did not take it in time. If I had been here when it was first made, the bleeding could have been stopped. By the by, how did you manage to get it?"

Howard motioned to Spring to leave the room, and then whispered to the doctor:

"Spring-Heel Jack was here again, and I had a grapple with him. He is a man, and a strong and skillful one, too. He nearly throttled me, and he must have had a knife with him, too."

Tatham listened attentively.

"That scoundrel will be caught some day," he said; "and when he is it ought to go hard with him. What in the world can set him to the antics he has played all round London? It has the air of an insane person, for there seems to be no motive for the actions save malice."

"There is some motive, malice or what not; but I don't think he can be insane. He acts with too much method for that. No, doctor, he seems to have some special spite against me and some one else. Remember that he has never made his appearance lately unless I am in the place, and that he follows and persecutes the lady that—"

Here George stopped, for he remembered that the physician was not acquainted with his feelings toward Rose Reid, and he did not wish to bring her name into the affair without necessity.

But Tatham had not been at the Tower for nothing, and he had used his eyes and ears to good purpose while there.

"Look here, Howard," he said. "You will excuse me for calling you that, but really I can't yet bring myself to call you by a title which I hear that you are not going to assume."

"You are right there, doctor. It would be an absurd thing in me to take the title of the premier duke of England, and have nothing in the world to maintain it but my sword as a simple gentleman."

"That's right, and shows that you are worthy to be a duke indeed. But what I was going to say is this: I know more than you think about your affairs, and the way in which this man, whoever he is, has followed you lately. Why don't you marry Rose Reid and become the duke in name, as well as fact. She has a fortune that will put you in a good position, and her father would not say you nay now. It was one thing for the simple lieutenant to offer himself, and another for you to ask his daughter to become the first duchess in England."

"My dear doctor, the thing is impossible, now. If I were mean enough to ask a woman who loves me, to support me for the rest of my life, there are obstacles in the way that you do not know of. General Reid has been prejudiced against me by some one, and his daughter has publicly given me the cut direct."

The doctor pursed his lips.

"That is strange. Why, I spoke to Reid about this matter, not a week ago; and he expressed himself as in favor of the match. Then you were only the next heir, and now you are a duke."

"But then I had some expectations, and

now I am a beggar, with nothing between me and ruin."

"That is where you are wrong. There is a great deal between you and ruin. The first title in England is worth a good deal. Why, there are scores of women in the land, who would jump at the chance of becoming a duchess if they were able to pay for it, as Rose Reid is. The fact is, Howard, if you are a wise man, you will go to General Reid and make him a formal offer. I will guarantee that he does not say 'no.'"

Howard had sunk into a brown study, while the doctor was speaking; but when the other had finished, he raised his head and told him what had occurred that very evening.

Tatham did not seem to be at all surprised, but made light of the snub that Lady Balcarras had administered, and the result of his visit was that he put George in a frame of mind much more comfortable than when he had come in, and went away, leaving the young officer with an injunction to go to sleep and forget all about Spring-Heel Jack and the rest of his troubles, as soon as he could.

Sleep has wonderful influence on the young; and George woke the next morning with a confused recollection of the affair of the night before, till it was recalled to his memory by the sight of his orderly, Spring, at the foot of his bed.

Then he remembered and sent for the sergeant of the guard, to find what had happened, and whether he had been mistaken in believing that it was Spring on guard the night before, when the orderly had denied being out.

The sergeant of the guard made his appearance, and surprised the young officer by saying that the man that had fired at Spring-Heel Jack, the night before, was a new recruit, and not Spring, at all. He was ready to swear to that.

Howard grew angry.

"Then bring the man here at once, that I may see him," he said. "If that was not Spring, last night, then it must be his twin brother."

The sergeant went away, and soon returned with a man who was, indeed, like Spring; but as clearly a different man.

He was a Gypsy, as one could see from his face, and the sergeant said:

"Here's the man, your honor, that fired at Spring-Heel Jack, last night."

"What is your name?" asked George curiously.

"Jasper Winterbotham, your honor," said the Gypsy, saluting awkwardly. "I seen the thing a-comin' and I thought it were my dooty to fire at it. 'Ope your honor didn't think I did wrong. I warn't the only one fired."

George shook his head.

"No, you did right, I suppose. That is all. You can go."

And then he lay back in his bed and wondered how it came that he had not recognized the man, the night before.

The sergeant, whom he had sent for, still stood at the foot of the bed, fidgeting, and presently asked respectfully:

"Does your honor want anything more of me?"

"No—yes, sergeant, how long has that man been in the service?"

"Only a few days, your honor. 'E were sent to the company yesterday, and I wouldn't 'a' put 'im on guard if one of the men 'adn't been took bad, and I 'ad to put some one in 'is place. I 'ope your honor ain't angry with me. The pore bloke didn't know it warn't the thing to fire, without alarmin' the gyard fu'st."

"No, sergeant, that is all right. You can go."

And then the sergeant was gone, and George had nothing to think of but how Spring-Heel Jack had foiled him again and given him a hurt that was likely to stop him from doing duty for some days.

"But he shall not escape me much longer," he said aloud.

CHAPTER XXX.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH.

OUT on Hampstead Heath, the Gypsy camp, to which Spring had come, the day after he enlisted, was in a state of excitement, amounting to mutiny.

Old Mother Spring was growling over the pot she was stirring; her gray-headed husband was swearing away in his native Romany, and the swarm of little black-headed children that were always running round under the wheels of the cart, was, to-day, unusually full of weeping and wailing, in consequence of the temper of the elders.

A very handsome black-eyed witch of twenty, John Spring's wife, was rocking to and fro, with a baby in her arms, and another girl, of the same regular features and dark olive skin, with the same splendid, but wicked-looking eyes, was rocking beside her, as if in sympathy, while the old woman, from her fire, dealt them occasional flings, with a possible intention of comforting them, but with the result of making them weep louder than ever.

The cause of the trouble seemed to be that old Mathias was the only man left in the camp, the two able-bodied members of the male sex, who had formerly been the support and consolation of the female portion, having both taken their departure together.

"Warn't it enough that one boy should go and be a lobster, but my nephew must do the same?" groaned the elder Mr. Spring, as he stared at the fire moodily. "Jasper's a fool, and, if the officers don't make 'im see it, afore 'e's a week older, I ain't no true Romany. To think that, arter all the advice I gi'n them boys, they should go and do the likes of this. It—it's disgusting, that's what it is."

And the elder Mr. Spring spat in the fire, to signify the extent of his disgust.

Old mother Spring sneered.

"Thou wert the same, when thou wert a lad," she said. "Doan't I mind the time when ye took the bounty in three regiments, when wars were a-goin' on, and thou never fired a shot fur the king? What's bred i' th' bone, woan't but coom out i' th' flesh. I'll back John to get out of the 'obble they got un in; and as fur Jasper, 'e's my brother's son, and the Winterbothams won't go back on the Springs, no day i' th' week."

Here the handsome girl that was rocking the baby turned her head quickly, with a sudden cessation of her weeping that was, to say the least, curious, as showing the lack of depth to her feelings, and snapped out:

"Oosh thy 'ead, boath on 'ee. Don't 'ee 'ear a *gorgio* a-comin'? Listen to the 'orse-'ooofs."

There was an instant stoppage of all signs of grief in the Gypsy camp, and the children were bundled off out of sight, while the keen sense of bargaining, inherent in the singular race, was made apparent by the way in which every one began to put the camp into the picturesque order in which it was customary to receive visitors.

For the hoofs of a horse were indeed audible on the heath, and a horse meant a man rich enough to ride a good animal; for there were few or no farmers left in that part of England.

Pretty soon they saw the horseman over the tops of the furze-bushes, and he had the dress and appearance of a rich man.

He wore a laced hat and a riding-suit of green velvet, while his animal was a hunter, of blood and bone that made old Mathias say to himself as he saw it:

"Moast ha' cost a couple of 'unner, at t' very least."

The cavalier was riding carelessly along, as if on a ride for health and amusement; but, as he was passing the camp of the Gypsies, he caught sight of the smoke, and turned his horse's head that way, riding up to the fire as if he wanted to see who they were that had made the blaze.

Before he could get near the place, the girl who was Winterbotham's wife ran out before the horse's head and began to cry:

"Ah, now, handsome gentleman, come and cross the poor Gypsy's palm with silver, and 'ave yer fortin told true. We don't never make no mistakes, and I can see that ye'r goin' to 'ave the beautifullest lady in all the land, fur your wife, God bless your 'andsome face."

It was indeed a very handsome face that looked down on her from the horse's back.

Not unlike her own in its dark beauty, with the same oval contour, and dark, lustrous eyes.

A black mustache shaded the lip with a downy bloom that increased the good looks

of the young cavalier, and he smiled with a singular sweetness, as he said:

"You are the true Romany; but I need no fortunes told to-day. I can tell them myself, if I would."

The Gypsy girl stared at him with an expression of bewilderment as she asked him:

"Bain't ye Romany, yerself?"

He had the outline and coloring of the race, as she could see; and the old Gypsy by the fire was eying him with a singular stare, as if he was trying to recognize the features of the strange horseman.

The stranger smiled at the question of Mrs. Winterbotham.

"There are no Romany but those who live in tents and rove the land in wind and weather. I can be no Romany, according to that."

"But fur all that ye 'ave the face and the voice and—can ye talk Romany?" she asked him suddenly.

The horseman nodded and answered in her own tongue.

"If I could not talk the tongue of my mother and father," he said, "I should be no Romany. I am seeking for Mathias Spring."

The accents of his tongue were those of the rest of the band, and old Mathias instantly came forward to the side of the horse.

"Who asks for me?" he said.

The horseman looked at the old Gypsy with as much interest as the other had been looking at him, as he said:

"Are you Mathias Spring?"

The Gypsy nodded.

"Then you ought to know me," said the horseman with a smile. "I am the Romany heir."

The words seemed to let in a flood of light on the old Gypsy's mind, for he burst out into a flood of welcoming words at once, and cried:

"Then ye must get off the beast and eat with the people of your tribe at once, that the heart of the *gorgio* may not take the heart of the Romany away forever. We have heard about you, and the Romany are glad that one of their race is to go among the proud *gorgios* at last, as the proudest of all."

The young stranger laughed as he got off his horse.

"The work is not over yet," he said; "and that is why I come to see you all. The *gorgio* heir is still alive, and, till he dies, I am nothing. Where are the brother and cousin that should be here? They must do the rest, before the Romany duke can take his seat."

The old woman called Mother Spring came forward to look at him carefully.

He seemed to be a little uneasy under her gaze, and asked Mathias:

"Who is this, then?"

Old Mathias favored him with a peculiar smile.

"That is the woman to whom ye owe all ye are, and it behooves ye to do her reverence."

The young man stared uneasily at the old hag.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE INTERVIEW.

GENERAL REID was pacing his room in the Tower, like an uneasy bear in a cage. George Howard was seated in a chair near him, his face pale; but the hurt of the preceding night being concealed by the thick neck-cloth of the day, with its lace-fringed ends.

George had been saying something to the old general that had agitated him considerably; for, as he paced the floor, he kept on muttering to himself all sorts of disjointed sentences.

"It is infamous, that he cannot be found! It is unheard of! He *must* be, he *must* be!"

"He *shall* be found, before I have done with him," said George Howard slowly; "but, in the mean time, general, the best advice I can give is that you remove the young lady from where she is now. She would be better, in a private house, where there is no chance for the scoundrel to hide among a lot of men, as there is here and in the palaces of his majesty. If you would be warned, I would say that Sir John Savage can better take care of her than any one I know."

"And why, sir?" asked Reid.

"Because he lives in a crowded thoroughfare, and no man can approach his house without being in the open street," said Howard. "If the young lady is left with Lady Balcarras, it is only a question of time when the monster will at last penetrate the pavilion; and if he does, the shock will surely kill her."

"Does she know of the visit of last night?" asked the general.

"I make no doubt she does, though I have not seen her, general. You forbid me to do it, and I have obeyed the order, though sorely against my inclination."

"Then you did right, sir. To be frank with you, I have heard that, from Lady Balcarras, that is in need of explanation, before you can be suffered to visit daughter of mine."

George Howard felt a thrill of pleasure. For the first time it seemed as if he was nearing the reason of the rough treatment he had received.

"May I ask you what is the nature of the accusation that has been made against me?" he said.

The old general hesitated.

"I hardly know whether it is an accusation or not; but Lady Balcarras says that you have no right to the title that you have inherited."

George started up.

"And why not?" he asked, in amazement.

The general went to the door and locked it before he answered.

When he came back he seemed to be at a loss for words, and hesitated long before he spoke to the other, a faint flush marking his agitation.

"You are now the Duke of Norfolk, by right of the law, and a beggar at the same time. You may think that the reason I have said my daughter must give you up. But that is nothing. Were the only barrier between you and Rose that of your poverty, thank Heaven, I have money and to spare, that should be spent freely, to give her happiness. But that is not all. You have a brother, who is now the richest man in England; but he no more resembles you than if he were a stranger. Lady Balcarras once lived near your father and mother, when they were in Scotland, and remembers when your brother was born. There is a scandal about it that I cannot tell you, but, till it is cleared away, there is no use in your persevering in your suit."

"Then the scandal does not concern me, but my brother. Is that the case, general?"

"Not entirely. But I really cannot tell you more. Go to Lady Balcarras and ask her. If she tells you the same as she told me, and you do not think that you ought to give up your hopes, you may come back. But I warn you that she will prove a more unkind person than I, and that you will find it hard to move her."

George Howard rose quietly.

"I will go to her, general, and if she tells me that my brother is not my brother, that is the worst she can say."

Then the young man bowed low, a courtesy that was punctiliously returned by the old general, when Howard left the Tower and mounted the horse he had brought with him from Hampton Court, to ride back.

His heart was full of bitterness at the fate which seemed to pursue him everywhere, and had separated him from Rose so long, for what he was convinced was nothing but the malicious gossip of an old woman.

But all the same, as he rode, he kept saying to himself:

"This must be the last of it, and whatever she says cannot alter the fact that Rose loves me, and that I can make her a duchess."

He was beginning at last to feel the advantage which he had gained, in spite of his kinsman's malicious will.

Arrived at the palace, he went at once to call on Lady Balcarras.

He was told that my lady was at home, and when he sent up his name, as plain Mr. Howard, the servant took it without any remark.

He was ushered into the little drawing-room, and had to wait there for a length of time that had its influence in making him feel angry and impatient with the old lady.

He sat by the window, and looking out, saw Rose Reid in the gardens of the palace,

with a party of ladies, accompanied by several officers of the guards and some civilians, that he recognized as courtiers.

It made him long to go out and speak to the young lady, but he refrained from doing so, and rose from his seat, so that he might not be tormented by the sight any more while he waited for the old lady.

At last she came in, and bowed to him with the most freezing politeness, as she asked:

"To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit, duke?"

He noticed that she gave him his title, but in a way that showed that she did not respect it much. Rather, there was an accent of quiet scorn in the title, which galled him.

"I have not assumed the title of duke, Lady Balcarras," he said quietly; "and until I do, I hope my friends will not greet me by any name but that I have always worn."

The old lady pursed up her lips.

"That is very proper, I suppose; but if you are not the Duke of Norfolk, may I ask who you are, then?"

"George Howard, the same as I was yesterday and the day before, madam."

"Very well, then, Mr. Howard," (with a strong emphasis on the name) "may I ask to what am I indebted for this visit?"

"Certainly, madam. I have just come from General Reid, who informs me that you have done me the honor to throw doubt on me, in some way. The general told me that you could afford me some information on the subject of why he has forbidden his daughter to speak to me any more."

The old lady colored slightly, and her eyes had an angry gleam, as she retorted:

"General Reid could have told you all I told him, with perfect propriety, sir."

"He did not, madam; but referred me to you. I hope that you are not afraid or ashamed to tell me the stories that you have told about me."

Lady Balcarras colored deeply through the wrinkles on her cheeks, as she retorted:

"I never said anything yet that I was ashamed to repeat, sir. I told the general that you were not a fit person for his daughter to associate with, and I tell you the same."

"And why not, madam?"

"If you cannot tell that yourself, sir, I am able to furnish the information, but not till you have avowed yourself ignorant of the stain on your name."

"I am ignorant of any stain on my name, madam, save that which you have been pleased to put there by speaking about me to others."

"Then listen, sir."

The old lady was in earnest now, and her face was very severe as she looked at him.

"I told General Reid, sir, that you were a young man of vicious habits, who makes his companions with the lowest people to be found in London, frequently going to prize-fights and such like entertainments, and that you had been seen to engage in contests with the very persons who make their living by such things. I have been told that you were seen, not a week ago, at one of these low places."

"What places, madam?"

"I believe they called it the Fives Court—I am not familiar with the names of the places."

"I have never been there, madam, save once, and that was a year ago. The person who gave you the information must have mistaken my brother for me."

The old lady curled her lip.

"That is possible, of course; but that is not the worst of it. You have spoken of your brother. What brother do you mean?"

"I mean Oliver Howard, madam."

"And are you sure that he is your brother?"

The question came to him with sudden directness, and staggered him.

"What reason have you for asking that question, madam?" he asked. "The general told me that you were acquainted with some scandal in regard to his birth. Is that true?"

"There is no scandal about the matter. I have knowledge of the fact that, if he be the son of Captain Howard, who went by

the name of Handsome Jack in former times, you are not."

Lady Balcarras spoke the last words with a spiteful emphasis that there was no mistake about. The old lady was in grim earnest.

Howard kept his temper.

"You have a great deal of information for one who does not belong to our family," he said sarcastically. "Perhaps you will not object to saying why you think this?"

"I certainly shall not," was the uncompromising reply. "The information is entirely at your service."

CHAPTER XXXII.

LADY BALCARRAS'S REVELATIONS.

GEORGE HOWARD remained silently waiting for the words the old lady might choose to vouchsafe to him; and she, on her part, did not seem to be in a hurry to relieve his suspense.

At last he said:

"I am waiting, madam, for what you are pleased to say. I presume you intend to say it."

Lady Balcarras gave a slight sigh.

She had been looking at the young man, and could not but see that he was handsome and had a look on his face that showed his unhappiness.

"I hardly know, sir," she began, "whether I ought to inflict pain upon you—"

"Be pleased to speak, then, madam. There is no pain, to me, like the pain of suspense."

"Then I will speak. Mr. Howard, when your father was a young man, he was quartered at the Scotch town of Aberfeldie, where I was brought up; and we met frequently at the balls and parties, attended by the officers of his regiment. He even distinguished me by some attentions beyond other ladies, and there were not wanting those who said that Handsome Jack Howard would—well, there is no need of going into that. I, for my part, did not feel toward your father, that love and affection which should subsist between a woman and the man into whose charge she is to commit her whole life."

And Lady Balcarras sighed again, with the air of a martyr.

"Your ladyship will please remember that I am in a great state of anxiety," said George coldly; "and spare me the recital of your little passages with my father."

The sneer was palpable, and the old lady's yellow cheeks reddened spitefully as she said:

"I will not trouble you, sir. The story is a brief one, and I will make it as brief as I can. Among the other ladies of Aberfeldie was the one who subsequently became Captain Howard's wife. She was richer than I—an heiress, in fact, and her father a tradesman—did not like the attentions of this handsome, but—you will excuse me for saying it, sir—graceless young soldier. In those days, sir, we did not look on tradesmen as entitled to be in the society of ladies and gentlemen, and had the idea that the match would be a good thing for Janet Mackay, as putting her into a society that her father's position, in spite of his wealth, did not entitle her to enter."

Howard interrupted her recital again, as she stopped and seemed to be musing.

"Considering that you are speaking of my mother, Lady Balcarras," he said, with marked emphasis, "and that these things must have happened long ago, I would suggest that you spare me as many comments as possible."

The old lady smiled as she saw his irritation.

"Thank you for the advice, sir. In my youth, it was not thought polite for a gentleman to interrupt a lady, or to criticise what she said. At all events, I must tell my story in my own way, and you are free to depart, if it be not to your taste."

George threw himself back in his chair, with an air of resignation, and the old lady went on:

"At all events there was a runaway match, and Janet became the honorable Mrs. Howard. In Scotland, you know, such matches are common; but they are not thought respectable, and when the man is a poor fortune-hunter, and the girl a rich, but vulgar person—no, you need not get up from your chair, for I am not going to say anything

against your mother, but the truth—when the facts are what I have said, the verdict of the surrounding country is generally that as the two have made their bed, so they must lie. It was so in this case. The captain thought that old Mackay, who sold snuff and tobacco, would be so much honored by the fact of his daughter having married an officer of his majesty's Guards, that he would forgive her at once, and spend his money like water, to do the match proper honor. But Sandy Mackay was not like English tradesmen, who adore a lord. He had a notion that his daughter had done wrong to disobey him, and he refused to have anything to do with the pair. And then creditors were pressing the handsome captain, and the regiment was shifted to other quarters. And so the old man saw his daughter no more, and the captain had to do what he could to raise money. He had to sell out and exchange into a marching regiment which went to India, and there he was, when old Sandy died, and left no will behind him. The money came to Janet by the operation of law, and her husband set to work to spend it as fast as could be done."

Here, as the malicious old lady paused again, George who had been listening attentively, put in quietly:

"This is all very interesting, Lady Balcarras, and shows that you hated my father cordially, but I do not see that you are performing your promise yet."

The old lady waved her hand airily:

"I never forget my promises. It was necessary to tell you what I have, that you might understand what follows. A large portion of Janet Mackay's fortune lay in land, in the town of Aberfeldie, and the young couple went to live there. I had married my lord, just before, and well remember what a fine figure they cut, when they came there, with their carriages and carriages, when the rest of us were content to live soberly and within our income, as becomes Christian people. And, as we all had predicted, it was not long before the extravagance of the captain brought its usual consequences. Money ran short, and they began to sell the land. And about that time came the scandals that I told you of."

George leaned forward as she said this, eager to hear the worst, and the old lady went on in her high-pitched voice, eying him keenly as she spoke, to note the effect of her words.

"You know that there are many Gypsies in this country, and a few in Scotland. We do not let them get the upper hand there, as you do here; and in consequence there are but few there, and what there are are more noticed. But there are times when even Gypsies are found rich, and the Scotch Gypsies are different from any that I have seen here. They engage in all sorts of trades, and accumulate considerable money. One of them was named Mathias Spring—"

George started.

"What name did you say?"

"Spring," said the old lady calmly. "Do you know the name?"

George leaned back, rather pale.

"No, never mind. I have heard it before; that is all. Pray proceed."

"Mathias was a horse-dealer, and well known throughout the country, as a man that could cheat the best jockeys in a bargain. But he had a great deal of money, and the captain was very fond of horses. And so the story came that Mathias had got the best of the captain, and that Howard was deeply in debt to him. I do not know the truth of the matter, or how the Gypsy got the captain in his power; but it was a matter of notoriety that the fine English officer was seen everywhere with the Gypsy, and that he compelled his wife to receive him at her table. And as Mathias was a handsome man—one of the handsomest I ever saw, though he was a Gypsy—it was said that the lady, who was frequently left by her husband, for weeks at a time, alone, was more intimate with the handsome Gypsy than a properly conducted lady should be. And they say—"

Here George rose from his chair, pale, and trembling with anger.

"And this was what you allowed me to come here to listen to? You dare to throw doubt on the memory of my mother!

Woman, it is lucky for you that you are a woman. But you have a husband, and he shall be answerable for the false reports that you have spread."

Lady Balcarras stared at him.

"You don't understand what I am talking about. I am only beginning my story. It is better you should hear it from me, than to have it thrust on you, by being spread abroad, in the news of the day."

With a strong effort George controlled himself and sat down again.

"Go on," he said.

Lady Balcarras spoke more rapidly than before, as if she had, for the first time, begun to respect the young man.

"I do not insinuate that your mother did anything wrong, sir. This is all that there is of it. At the time you were born your father was away, and when he came back the servants at the house—for servants will gossip, you know—told in the town that he said strange things about you, and refused to look at you. After that the Gypsy was with him all the time, and you were left in Scotland, while the captain went off to the race-courses in England, leaving your mother alone at Aberfeldie. The separation was a matter of public notoriety in the town, and when at last your mother was sent for to England, she left you behind in the care of servants, and you were finally sent to an uncle of your mother's, where you were when the news arrived that your brother was born."

George, who had been listening more attentively as the story progressed, here shifted his position. He remembered well the first great event in his life, when he was a child, just beginning to be sensible. He remembered the news coming to him, and how he had said, as soon as he saw the dark-eyed child, that it was "not his brother."

Lady Balcarras noted his interest and said:

"I thought I should find something that would show you that I am telling the truth. You were sent for when the news came of the birth of your brother, and as my lord had, just about that time, received the position in the household that he now holds, I went to England. I went to visit your mother, for we had been acquainted in Aberfeldie, and in a strange country any one, from one's own home, of course, is better than a stranger. I went to her house and found her all alone with her servants and the new infant, deserted in the very time when it would seem as if her husband should have been by her."

"Well?" said Howard impatiently, seeing that she paused again in her story. "What was the purport of your visit, and what did you discover? Can you not see that you are putting me in torture, all the time, or do you wish to do it on purpose?"

Lady Balcarras shook her head.

"I have no desire to torture any one, sir. It is a sad story, that I have to tell; and, if you had not come to me as you have, I would not tell it at all. I paid your mother a formal visit, but, as soon as she saw me, she burst into tears, and the sight melted my woman's heart. We had a confidential conversation, and she confided to me the fact that the child in her lap was not her own, but that the captain had made her take it, and own it, by the threat of an exposure of the doubt that had been cast on your birth. There, sir, now you know all. The man that has taken the fortune of the Duke of Norfolk is not your brother; but neither, perhaps, are you the son of Captain Howard."

"And is that all you have to say?" asked the young man, very pale.

"That is all. After the revelation made me by your mother, which she made me pledge myself to keep secret—"

"And well you have kept the secret!" interrupted George, bitterly. "Had such a secret been intrusted to me, I should never have revealed it while I lived. 'To what does it tend?'"

"Only to this," said the old Scotchwoman coldly. "that Rose Reid is the daughter of a valued friend of mine, and, till the stain is taken from your birth, there is no place for you in the world. The title of duke may yet go to another."

"You mean the man who is called my

brother," said George, still more bitterly. "That is like your notion of justice."

"I mean no such thing. If you are the man that is worthy to be the first duke in England, I have told you something that may be of service to you. Your mother told me that your brother was not her son, and that Mathias Spring was its father, and had compelled your father to take it into his house as his own. Work on that, as you best can."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RESULT OF THE REVELATIONS.

As the old lady spoke, she rose from her seat with a severe air, and intimated, by her manner, that the interview was over.

George was so stunned by the news that he could hardly realize what he had heard, and it was in a pleading way that he said:

"Lady Balcarras, let me ask one question if you please. Did my mother say that Captain Howard was not my father?"

The old lady pursed up her lips.

"She did not. But on that question I did not press her. She asseverated, in the most solemn manner, that she was innocent of any wrong to your father, and that he had treated her in the most cruel manner, from the time that he found her father would not relent. She hinted that she could tell more, if she dared, but she told me that the truth would never be found out till Mathias Spring was compelled to tell it."

"Then I will find him and wring it out of him, if it costs me my life," said George solemnly. "One question more, and I have done, Lady Balcarras. Is this Mathias Spring yet alive, think you, or not?"

Lady Balcarras shrugged her shoulders.

"I cannot tell. He was a Gypsy, and at that time rich; but who knows where he is now? Good-morning, Mr. Howard."

And George went slowly out of the room, as if he were dazzled with the light, and could not see his way plainly.

When he got into the garden, he took his way to his quarters, to think over it all. He had known very little of his mother, for she had died soon after the birth of Oliver, and he had but a faint memory of her, as a gracious, kind creature, who had petted him, and that was all.

Now he had learned the truth, that she had been cruelly treated by his father, and that, for some reason, that father had fallen into the power of a Gypsy named Spring.

Then he remembered the name of his own orderly, and resolved to ask him if he knew any such person.

The resolve was taken as he was going to his quarters, and the first person he saw, as he neared them, was the identical Spring, at the door, scouring away at a belt, as if he had been an orderly all his life.

He rose and saluted his master respectfully; and George, who knew the suspicious nature of men of his stamp, said nothing of what was nearest his heart till he had entered the room and taken off his boots, muddy from his long ride.

"Will your honor have dinner at the mess or here?" asked the orderly.

"Here," said Howard. "And—by the by, Spring, have you any family?"

"Family, your honor?" the Gypsy asked, in return, his eyes indicating surprise.

He did not answer the question, and George repeated it, in another form:

"Yes. I thought that you might have some father or mother that you might want a leave of absence to visit, for a few hours, occasionally, without running the risk you did, the other day, when you were punished."

The Gypsy seemed to be struck with the kind way in which the thing was put, so he answered without any more hesitation:

"Well, yes, your honor, I've an old father and mother, as camps on 'Amstead 'Eath, jest about now; but, Lor' bless yer honor, they don't care fur me, no more'n to git all they can out of me."

"Let me see: what did you say your father's name was? John, like your own?"

"Not a bit of it, your honor. My father come from 'Ungary, ye know, where there's a lot of people, and 'is name's the same as most of 'em, out there. Some's George, and some's Mathias; but my father 'e took the name of Mathias, ye know."

"That's all. Get the dinner, as soon as

you can," said George quietly, having found out all he wanted to know; and then he sat back, when the orderly had gone, reflecting on what he should do, when he found the Gypsy father, that had come into his life so strangely.

"There was some fate that threw Spring into my way," he reflected, "and made him my faithful follower. He seems to positively like me, for no other reason than that I beat him at his own game, and gave him a broken nose. I must find his father, and get him to tell the truth, by some means or other."

But, the more he brooded, the more doubtful it seemed, that anything could be done with the old Gypsy, who had had a hold on his father. If he could have influenced the elder Howard, he must have had some terribly strong hold on him; and what chance had the son of the same man, who knew nothing of the weaknesses of the Gypsy, to terrify him in his turn. But when he remembered what John Spring had said about his father and mother camping on Hampstead Heath, he had more hopes, for he reflected that the Gypsy, in all probability, would be poor, and so accessible to bribery, if nothing more.

But what had he to offer in the way of a bribe to the Gypsy, if he succeeded in finding him, and it proved the same man?

All these thoughts were turning over in his mind, as Spring came in with his dinner, and he ate in silence, thinking over what he could do, while the orderly was watching him, as if he had been trained all his life in the duties which he had only assumed a few days before.

Dinner over, Howard ordered his horse, and told Spring that he was going for a ride, and that he need not expect him back till night.

"To-morrow," he pursued, "I intend to give you leave to go and see your family; but, in the mean time, I want you to stay here, and watch at night, in case that scoundrel that plays Spring-Heel Jack should come along again."

Spring promised to do what he had been told, and, as his master rode away, he muttered to himself regretfully:

"E's a better man, by far, than the other. If we 'ad it to do hover again, 'twouldn't be as 'tis now."

But he went about his business as usual, and employed himself in cleaning his master's arms and accouterments, while George Howard took his way from the palace, and rode rapidly round the outskirts of London, toward the north, in the direction of Hampstead Heath.

He had come back from the Tower at noon, and his departure was early, so that, by the middle of the afternoon, he had surmounted Highgate Hill, and was entering the heath, keeping a sharp lookout for Gypsy fires.

He was not very long in discovering the object he sought; for there was but one camp on the heath, and the smoke rose in the air, over the low furze-bushes, plain to be seen, about a mile away from the place he entered.

As he neared the place he was surprised to see a handsome bay horse feeding loose on the heath; and the shape and beauty of the animal were such that he could not imagine any mere Gypsy could possibly own it.

Then he remembered what Lady Balcarras had told him about Mathias having been a horse-trader and rich, and the idea occurred to him that he might make the horse an instrument to open negotiations with the man.

He rode on till he neared the camp, and, as he came in sight, out came running a crowd of barefooted children, half-naked, dirty, and very picturesque, staring at him with amazement.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MATHIAS SPRING.

GEORGE entered the Gypsy camp, and beheld a fire, with a tripod built over it, from which hung a pot, smelling by no means illy. An old hag, with the face of a witch, was stirring the pot, moving her toothless jaws as she stirred, while two younger women, both decidedly beautiful, in the dark style of their tribe, were seated on the grass, not

far off, one nursing a baby, the other plaiting a basket.

None of them looked up as he rode in, and all seemed to ignore him studiously.

He checked his horse at the spectacle; for he had been used to have Gypsies crowd round him when he visited their camps, asking him whether he wanted his fortune told, and begging.

As none of them offered to come near him, and there was no sign of a man in the camp, he dismounted from his horse, and said to the old woman over the fire:

"I see a horse outside, and he looks like a good one. Is it yours? and do you want to sell it or not?"

The old woman turned her bleary eyes on him, and made no reply but a scowl.

"Did you hear?" he asked, in a louder tone, thinking she might be deaf.

She nodded silently, but went on stirring.

Then he turned to the woman with the baby, and repeated the question to her:

"I doan't own t' horse. It be feyther's," was the sole reply he received.

The other young woman looked up from the basket she was plaiting, and eyed his red coat with a look as if she was interested in it.

He noted the look, and asked her:

"Well, and can't you tell me something, my pretty lass?"

She curled her lip sarcastically.

"I bain't no pretty lass o' thine. We doan't want no moor gorgios now. We're goin' to be ryes,* and live in palaces t' rest of oor lives."

The words surprised him, but he persisted in trying to make these sullen Gypsies talk a little, to gain information.

"And do you live all alone here?" he asked.

"Noa, we doan't," said the girl, in the same scornful way. "Feyther's 'ere, and 'e knows 'ow to take keer on us."

"Ah, your father—is his name Mathias Spring, or what is it?" asked George.

The moment he said it, he saw he had made a mistake; for the old woman at the fire called out something in a strange language, and the two younger ones favored him with a suspicious glance, and remained obstinately silent as they went on with their occupations.

"Then where the deuce is this Mathias?" he cried impatiently. "I want to see him, if he wants to get into something which will make him rich for the rest of his life."

The old woman turned toward him, and her sunken eyes gleamed with avarice.

"Ow much wilt give to see 'im?" she asked.

George hesitated.

"Is he here?" he asked in turn.

"Noa, but I can call 'im," she answered.

George drew a sovereign from his pocket.

"Call him, and this is yours," he said.

She clutched at it at once, running to the side of his horse with an agility that her bowed frame and shrunken limbs did not promise, and he held the piece away, saying:

"Where is Mathias? You can't have it, unless you call him for me."

She pointed to the little barrel-shaped tent, at the door of which the children were playing when he came, and whispered:

"E's in there; but I dassin't 'sturb 'im. Go thou, an thou dar'st."

He tossed her the piece, and went to the tent at once, when he looked in and saw the giant frame of the old Gypsy stretched on the ground, fast asleep.

"Hallo, Mathias, Mathias!" he cried; "wake up, man, for here is a stranger come to see thee. Wake up, I say."

The Gypsy rolled over on his side; fixed his eyes on the door, and George saw, from the stare, that the man had been drinking and was savage in his cups.

With a volley of oaths he burst out, demanding to know why he was disturbed.

George saw that his face was strikingly like that of his orderly, though it was much older, and half-hidden by an enormous gray beard. He remembered the way in which he had conquered the son, and thought he would try the same on the father. Therefore it was in tones as rough as those of the Gypsy himself, that he roared:

"Come out, you dog! Don't you know how to talk to a gentleman, when you see

* Rye, from the Hindoo *Rai*, a rich man.

one? Come out here, or I'll take my whip and thrash some politeness into you. Come out, I say."

As he spoke, he shook his whip menacingly and the Gypsy cast a glance at him that reminded him of a wild beast under the eye of its trainer, half-savage, half-afraid.

"Come out," he repeated. "I want to speak to you, and how the deuce can I do it, if you stay in that hole of yours?"

But the Gypsy, who seemed at first to have been dazzled by the light on his eyes, just fresh from sleep, here exclaimed:

"I'll coom out, man, and thou'lt wish I 'adn't, may be, afore thou'rt done wi' me."

With that he came out of the tent, on all-fours, and raised before George the frame of one of the finest-made men he had ever seen in all his life.

He squared his shoulders, and asked, in a tone about which there was no hiding the menace that it contained:

"Well, young whipper-snapper, and what wants thee wi' me, now thou'rt here. I'll warm thy jacket for thee, in the shake of a lamb's tail."

"Better men than you have tried that before, Mathias Spring," said George Howard, quietly; "and your son, among others. I gave him a face he never got before, and he is now a soldier in my company. If you try any of your tricks on me, I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever got in all your life."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the old Gypsy squared off at him, in a style that showed much acquaintance with the art of self-defense, crying:

"An ye walloped John, ye can't wallop me. Coom on, and I'll doost thy jacket fur thee."

With that he advanced on the young officer, and began a furious assault, that showed he had not boasted in vain. Old as he was, he had yet the strength of a giant, and George had all he could do to take care of himself, assaulting the other being out of the question altogether.

But George, though he had not made prize-fighters his daily companions, was by no means an ignoramus at the art of self-defense; and he knew well enough that, if he could keep up long enough, the old man was sure to tire first.

He kept retreating warily for a space, and the Gypsy tried all he knew, but in vain, in consequence of the tactics of the younger one, who would not advance to meet him and give him a chance.

At last Mathias growled fiercely:

"Thou'rt a lily-livered coward; that's what thou art, like the man thy face is like. Stand oop like a mon, an thou dar'st."

But he was panting for breath as he spoke, and George only laughed at him.

"If you're such a man as you say," the younger man retorted, as he kept backing away, "make me come close to you."

Then, as the old Gypsy, with a last desperate effort, rushed in to close, George skipped back and let out a blow which took effect on the nose of the other.

Had Spring been as cautious as he had been at the beginning, it could never have reached him, but he had grown to despise his adversary, and the repulse was the more severe that it was totally unexpected.

With a sort of roar of rage, he plied George with blow on blow, to all of which the younger man made no reply, but kept backing away, seeing that the older man was fast exhausting himself.

Presently the Gypsy stopped, panting, and in that moment George went in on him, with the more strength that he had saved himself all through the fight, on purpose for this time.

He sent in his blows as straight as he could, and the old man had hardly strength to parry and return them.

First one, then another, took effect; and the Gypsy began to bleed, while his efforts grew feebler and feebler, as his strength waned.

At last George got in a blow that floored him, and as he fell he rolled over and cried out, just as his son had done before him:

"Old thy 'and. Yer honor's a better man than I thought. I'll go wi' yer honor anywhere."

George looked down on him with surprise.

There was no more appearance of sullenness about him. Contrary to the general run of men, he seemed to have, not only a hearty respect but also a kind of affection for the man who had been able to lay him low.

"Get up," said the young officer quietly. "I told you that I wanted to speak to you, and now is the best time. Your name is Mathias Spring, is it not? And you knew Captain Howard, once on a time, did you not?"

The old Gypsy was slowly rising as he asked the question, and when it was finished, he stood before the young man, as if lost in astonishment, gaping, rather than saying:

"Oo be thou, then?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

HOWARD saw that he had astonished the Gypsy, and as he did not want to silence him and make him afraid, so that he might not speak at all, he said, in a mysterious way:

"It matters not who I am; but I know you, and I know that you had dealings with Captain Howard, for which you could be punished, if I were not a friend of yours. Come aside with me, where none can hear us; for I have that to say which must be said to you alone."

His mysterious air had its influence on the other, who, having felt the prowess of his arm, was disposed already to hold him in reverence, partly from fear, but more from the admiration of physical superiority that is often found in men who are strong themselves.

"I'll go with your honor, wherever your honor wants," he said.

"Then follow me," said George, and with that he was taking him away into the quiet recesses of the heath, when the old woman, who had been watching him keenly, interposed with some words in her own tongue, which made old Spring stop and say hesitatingly:

"We can talk all we want, 'ere: can't we?"

"No," said George decidedly. "I don't want any one to hear what I say to you, and what you say to me. I have come here to see you, and I will have it my own way or not at all."

Again the old woman said something, to which her husband replied in the same language, and then he followed his conductor into the open heath, where George sat down in a place where no one could get near them, to overhear what was going on.

He kept his own face toward the camp, so that the old woman could not creep up to listen, without being seen, and began:

"Your name is Mathias Spring?"

"Yes, it be, and I ain't ashamed on it."

The Gypsy had assumed an air of more sullenness than he had shown at first.

"Very good. In former times you met Captain Howard, in Scotland."

"Ow do you know that?"

"I know it, and you dare not deny it."

"Well, I ain't denyin' on it: am I?"

"And when you had known the captain for a time, he got into debt with you?"

"Well, suppose 'e did: what o' that?"

"Simply this: How much money did he owe you? It might be paid, if you treated me rightly."

He watched the Gypsy while he spoke and saw a gleam in his eyes that showed him he had touched the right chord.

"You might get all that you lent him and a good deal more besides," pursued Howard, "if you would do what I want you."

The Gypsy looked him in the eye.

"Afore I tell 'ee anything I want to know 'oo thou beest?"

"That is not to the purpose. If I am ready to give you money, it is nothing to you who I am. Are you ready to tell me how much he owed you, and how much you want?"

"'E owed me more'n 'e iver paid, and 'tis all gone now. What does thee want to know fur?"

"In order to pay you. How can I pay the money, if you won't tell me what it is?"

"'Ast got the money wi' thee?"

"Of course not. I don't carry money about like that. If you want it you must do something for me in return."

"And what is't?"

George looked keenly at him as he weighed what he was going to say. He was coming to the end of his negotiation, and if the Gypsy now refused, he would be as badly off as before.

But he felt a sort of conviction that he could manage this strange man that caused him to say:

"You must tell me how it was that you induced the captain to acknowledge your son as his own, and why you cast suspicion on the birth of his true son. That is what you must do."

Mathias Spring burst out into a discordant laugh at once.

"Thou beest only a fool, arter all. I see through all thou'st said. Thou'rt the son of the man 'imself, and that's what thou'rt arter. I'm no *gorgio*, but a true Romany; and thou canst whistle for what thou want'st. Dost 'ear me?"

George jumped up as he spoke and stood over him, eying him sternly, but the Gypsy never quailed at the glance.

"Then look here," said the young officer, with an emphasis that showed he was in earnest. "There are two of your people in my power now, and you will be the third, if you don't speak out. You will do what I tell you, or, within one hour from now, I'll have you in prison, and there you shall stay till I choose to let you out."

The Gypsy curled his lip.

"Talk don't cost much," was all the answer he vouchsafed.

"Very well, then, get up and let us go on with the fight that we were at when you gave in. Get up and fight, or be called a coward, and I'll take my whip to you instead of the bare knuckles."

The Gypsy changed color slightly.

"I've fought all I want," he said sullenly.

"I ain't bound to fight no more."

George had kept the whip hanging at the wrist by a strap all the time, and now he raised it and dealt the Gypsy a cut across the face that brought the blood, when Mathias leaped up and began to fight again the best he knew how.

The sting and humiliation had goaded him into fighting, but he knew he was no match for the strong and active young man, and he fought in a style very different from what he had taken before.

George, on the other hand, was determined to make him give in, and he knew, from experience, that there was no way so sure as that of physical chastisement.

He soon began to get in his blows on the old Gypsy, who did his best, but was tired out, before he began, from the exertions he had used in his former contest.

In a very few minutes he was beaten back, his face showing the marks of the punishment, his eyes swelled and nearly closed, while blood was streaming down his face.

He began to look frightened, for the first time in the contest, as he noted the fierce way in which George pressed on him, pitiless and grim, not sparing a blow, and at last he called out:

"I'm licked. What more d'ye want, man?"

George only answered him with another blow, and then took the whip in his hand and began to ply the Gypsy with the lash, as if chastising a dog.

The effect of the whip was greater than that of the fist.

Mathias could not parry the lashes, and he was too weak to fight back, so that he fled as fast as he could, till George, young and active, ran after him, tripped him up, and then began to flog him mercilessly, as he lay on the ground, till Mathias yelled out:

"Stop it, and I'll do anything ye want me. Ye're the devil himself, and that's the truth of it."

"Then answer my question, and tell me how you got the captain into your toils, or I'll cut the hide off ye inch by inch."

And the usually mild young man, now that he was completely roused, looked like a fiend, with his fierce blue eyes blazing with anger, as he held the whip suspended aloft, ready for more chastisement.

"How did you get him in your power?"

Tell it quick, and take care you don't lie about it, or it will be the last of you."

"'E were a fool, and I didn't never get 'im in my power at all. 'E put 'imself there. 'E would go to races and bet on the wrong 'orse, and that's the way 'e come to owe me a thousand pound and more. There, that ought to be enough."

The eye of the Gypsy was lowering, and his bruised face looked sullen.

George, for answer, dealt him another cut of the whip.

"You're lying to me, sir. Tell the truth. Now go on, and as soon as you tell the truth, I'll stop thrashing you."

With that he began to ply the lash with all the force of which he was capable, the Gypsy writhing to and fro, unable to escape it, till at last he shouted wildly:

"Old thy 'and, and I'll tell thee all."

George desisted, and the other began:

"'E owed me money fur bets and fur 'orses, and I let it go on, fur I 'ad a plan to git even. 'E'd often told me 'ow 'e were a-goin' to be jook, when some one died, and that 'is sons 'ud 'ave the property arter 'im, so I 'ad my plan. Fu'st I thought to put a boy of my own in the place, but then come the fu'st boy of 'is'n, and that sp'iled the plan. 'E wouldn't 'ear to 'ave that boy put arter a Romany, so I 'ad to let it go, fur what I c'u'd git. 'Twas many a year afore I 'ad a boy of my own; but, by that time 'e were wuss in debt than afore, and all my people was in the plan wi' me. They lent me the money to keep 'im a-goin', and 'e 'ad a good time of 'un, while it lasted. At last come the boy I 'spected, and we made it oop that 'is wife should pretend it was 'er'n. T'ould woman, over there by the fire, was the mother, and the boy was born when the fu'st boy was four years old. The lady didn't like it; but we 'ad a way to make 'er coom to 'er milk, we did—"

"And what was that?" asked George sternly.

Mathias grinned.

"We jest drabbed 'er."

"What's that?"

"What you *gorgios* call *p'izen*," was the startling reply. "She didn't know but what 'twere all right, ye know."

And then he began to speak out in earnest.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIS MAJESTY, THE KING.

THAT afternoon George Howard rode slowly on his return to Hampton Court; his rein hanging on the horse's neck; his face thoughtful and sober; his thoughts in a whirl.

He had heard things he could hardly believe, and which left his brain confused; but in all his confusion he retained a burning sense that he had been treated with vile injustice, and that there was no way out of the trouble that he could see.

Oliver was not his brother, but a Gypsy outcast, thrust into his family, by a plot, the full villainy of which he could hardly yet fathom.

But Gypsy or not, the man was now firmly intrenched in the fortune of the old duke, unless the power of the king himself were invoked, and in that case the whole scandal, that his father had inflicted on his family, could not but come out, in the full blaze of publicity.

Revolving all these things in his mind, and not yet decided on what he should do, he came to Hampton Court. As he rode in, the sun was setting, and the gardens were full of the courtiers, strolling to and fro in the alleyways, waiting for the coming of the king.

His way did not lie through the gardens, but he was spied by more than one, and all heads were turned his way, as if in curiosity, for the "beggar duke," as he was already called, was an object of great interest at court.

He went to his quarters; took off his riding dress, and put on his uniform to go out, for he had an idea that the king might summon him to his side again, as he had before.

In this he was not mistaken, for, before he had completed his dressing, he was disturbed by a tap at the door, and Spring put his head into the room to say:

"Please, your honor, there's a page from 'is majesty, as says you're wanted."

Then he vanished, and George, soon after, found himself bowing before the eccentric old king, who seemed in an unusually gracious humor, for he made a sign to the courtiers, near by, to draw further back, which they did with great unwillingness, because they dared do no otherwise, while his majesty began a long catechism of the young duke, as to what he intended to do and what he had done yet, in the way of disputing the will which had made him a beggar; to all of which George only answered that he had "not yet fully determined on his course."

"When you do, let me know, and the courts shall do you justice, duke," said the king, emphatically. "The welfare of the kingdom is at stake, and the public welfare is more important than the indulgence of whims of this bad old duke, who had never been an honor to his order, and, at the last, did what he could to disgrace it. In the mean time, I have resolved to appoint you first gentleman of the bed-chamber, and let you have the buck-hounds, to give you the wherewithal to maintain some of the state that belongs to your rank. And, by the by, have you found out that fellow they call Spring-Heel Jack yet?"

"No, your majesty. But with your majesty's permission, I intend to stay on guard to-night, and every night after, till I do. There is no way so sure to catch him as keeping the same men on the watch all the time; for they will get to know his ways. If your majesty has no objection, I will take charge of the guard, to-night, again."

The king shrugged his shoulders.

"Queer taste you have, very queer, very queer; but as you please. By the by, duke, do you know General Reid?"

"I have served under him, your majesty, and that very lately, in the Tower."

"Yes, yes, in the Tower. He is the Constable; is he not, duke?"

"He is, your majesty."

"Yes, yes, he is getting old, by the by, and we need a younger man in that place. Is it not true that this Spring-Heel Jack made an appearance in the Tower, some time ago?"

"It was the first place to which he came, and the monster has persecuted the daughter of General Reid ever since."

"Hey, hey, what's that? what's that?"

"I say, your majesty, that, every time he has been seen lately, he has come where that young lady is, and striven to hurt or alarm her."

"Hey! hey! that's very strange, duke! Bless my soul, very strange! But he has come here? The young lady is not here, is she?"

"She was, this morning, your majesty, with Lady Balcarras."

"Hey, hey, what's that, what's that? Lady Balcarras? Why, she was here, not long ago, and asked for a leave of absence from her majesty, to go to London. That's very strange indeed."

Then he turned to the queen, who was in the habit of being very silent when the king was busy, but always ready when wanted; for his majesty's memory was already getting treacherous.

"What was that Lady Balcarras said about her visit to London?" he asked.

"She asked for leave to go to London, to take back a young lady to her father," the soft tones of the queen replied.

George heard her, and was tempted to forget the etiquette of the court, by asking a question himself; but he saved himself from the solecism in time, and the king saved him the trouble by saying at once:

"Then it must be the same lady. Perhaps she had heard of the monster, and got frightened out of her life again."

"I fear that must be so, your majesty, and if it be not improper—I—"

The king smiled knowingly:

"Hey? hey? want to go after her? hey, duke? Well, it will go very well with what I was going to say. I was telling you Reid is growing old, and it is time he was retired and put on the pension list. How would you like to be Constable of the Tower, yourself?"

The question surprised Howard so much that he stammered out:

"If your majesty is in earnest."

"Of course, I am in earnest. I never

joke, duke. I have, in fact, ordered your appointment made out, and the best thing you can do is to go to the Tower this very night, and take command. If you get a chance at Spring-Heel Jack, it may end in unraveling this whole mystery."

George bowed low.

"I do not know that I have anything that is positive evidence on which to go, your majesty," he said; "but it seems as if the visits of the monster follow those of Miss Reid, wherever she goes, and it is barely possible that he may go there, this time. He has had a bad experience of trying his tricks at Hampton Court."

"Then, the quicker you go, the better," said the king, in his nervous, jerky way. "Be off with you, duke. Go to the chamberlain, and he will give you your appointment. Then go and take your command, at once. You are Colonel of the Horse-Guards, from this date."

And George, hardly knowing whether he was awake or asleep, made his way out of the gardens, and, an hour later, was driving to London, in one of the royal coaches; his new commission as Colonel of the Horse-Guards in the breast of his uniform.

He did not arrive at the Tower till after the gates were shut for the night, and the rules of the place forbid the admittance of strangers; but at the sight of the credentials he brought everything flew open, and he entered the Tower, in which he had once stood guard as a subaltern, as the acknowledged master, come to supersede General Reid, completely stunned by the news that he was to be superseded in the command of the place where he had hoped to end his days.

The old soldier was so much taken aback by the news that he had almost forgotten his courtesy in receiving the new Constable, but he made as polite—if rather stiff—a salute as he could, and said to the young man who had superseded him:

"I am sorry that I had not intimation of this change a little sooner, duke, for then I could have vacated my quarters, so as to give you room at once."

George, who saw that the feelings of the old general were hurt by the slight that he thought was being put on him, replied, in a low tone:

"We can discuss that matter when the servants are gone, general. In the mean time, let me say that you are at perfect liberty to occupy the rooms you have always occupied, till you can make other arrangements. I did not come to turn you out, I can assure you."

The words mollified the old soldier, and he said in a more placable way:

"I never criticise the orders of his majesty, and he has reasons, I suppose, or he would not have done what he has. I am ready to accompany your grace to visit the posts, and hand over the command at once."

"I will not trouble you to-night, general. I am only anxious to effect the change with the least trouble to you."

Then he came closer to Reid, to whisper:

"The command shall remain where it always has, but I came here to-night to catch Spring-Heel Jack. Your daughter has come back, I believe."

Reid favored him with a suspicious glance.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," he said, in the same guarded way.

"Only this," said George, "that if he comes to the Tower to-night, he will be taken, and I have an idea that he *will* come."

The general seemed to be impressed by the way he spoke, and replied:

"I hope you will have success, sir."

"In the mean time," said George—for they were now alone in the Constable's room, and able to talk without listeners, "I wish to say to you, general, that I have seen Lady Balcarras, and that her information is wrong. That is why I came here to-night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE NIGHT WATCH.

As he said these words, the beggar duke took a seat uninvited, as a reminder to the old general that he had a right there, and looked inquiringly up into Reid's face.

The old officer colored slightly; for he saw that Howard had taken a new line of conduct.

"I presume," he said, "that you have

taken a view of her ladyship's information which suits your own side of the question; but it does not satisfy me, sir. I have known Lady Balcarras for a long time, and have never known her to make a false accusation against any one."

"For all that, the lady may be mistaken, general, and in this case she is. Have you any objection to talk it over with me?"

"I have, sir. I have given you my determination, and it is not to be broken without cause."

"Then you refuse to listen to my proposal to make your daughter the first duchess in the country: is that it, general?"

"You have no power to make her such, sir. There is serious doubt thrown on your own birth; and the fortune, that should go with the title, is not yours to bestow."

"That is true. But suppose I had proof that the man who has supplanted me in the matter of the fortune is an impostor—what then? And suppose, further, that I had the confession of his father, yet living, that he is not the son of my father and mother at all; would that not alter your decision?"

"It would not, sir."

"What would, then?"

"When you are acknowledged Duke of Norfolk, and in full possession of the fortune as well as the rank, *that* would alter my decision and nothing short of that, sir."

George rose from his seat.

"General Reid, you shall see me Duke of Norfolk, in possession of the fortune you have mentioned, and that within three days. When you do, I shall expect an apology from you, for the way you have treated me in my misfortune."

"If such a thing should happen, sir, you would be entitled to demand the apology; but you will excuse me for saying that it is rather problematical at present."

"Perhaps not so much as you think. In the mean time, general, may I ask if Miss Reid is in the Tower, or not?"

"She is, sir. Lady Balcarras brought her here, for fear that she might be frightened by the monster that seems to follow you, into all places, *wherever you go*."

The general spoke the last words in such a way that George asked him wonderingly:

"General, it is not possible that you have a suspicion that *I* am connected, in any way, with the actions of this man?"

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"Wherever *you* go, *he* is sure to come. Had you stayed at Hampton Court, he would have gone to that place; but now you have come here, *you think he will follow you*. Lady Balcarras—" George interrupted him with an air of irritation, asking:

"What? Is that lady here also? Can she not let me alone for a moment? I suppose it is to her that I am indebted for this new accusation. So I am to be made responsible for this man, when I have done all I can to find him out."

"Lady Balcarras says it is singular that, wherever *you* go, *he* comes. She thinks there is some collusion between you."

"Indeed? And perhaps you believe this?"

"I have a suspicion that you *know* more of the apparition than you have intimated to me, sir."

George compressed his lips to avoid speaking out the irritation he felt. After a pause, to control himself, he said:

"It is true that I have a suspicion who he is; but no more *knowledge* than you have. But that is not the point. I came here, because I have noticed that the monster follows your daughter; and I would not have him come, when I was not here to protect her. You know my feelings toward her, general, and that ought to protect me from such suspicions as you have just uttered. I will bid you a good-evening for the present."

And he went out of the room and made a round of the posts in the Tower, the men having heard of the change that had taken place, and giving him the more ready obedience, that they were proud of having a man of his rank placed over them.

Then he went to a room where he had been quartered in former times, when he was but a subaltern, and sat down to think over what he should do in the future.

The prospect was by no means bright, although he had made the most of his chances, in speaking to General Reid.

There was no way in which he could get

over the will which had made him a beggar, that he could see, and, after a long study of the situation, he exclaimed aloud:

"No, no, there is no hope. I was better off as plain Mr. Howard."

"Are you sure of that?" asked a voice, close to his ear; and, when he looked round, there was the figure of the Hindoo adept, Ram Mandana, seated on a chair at the other side of the table, in the faint light of the lamp, his dark eyes gleaming with the solemn, almost unearthly light, that always appeared there, when they two were alone.

At another time George would have been startled; but he had become accustomed to the strange appearances of the mysterious Hindoo, and he asked him calmly:

"Why have you come, Ram Mandana?"

"As I came before—as your friend. Be-think you, that I have never come before, but to warn you of danger to you and yours."

"Is there danger to-night?" asked George.

"There is, and great danger. If you escape to-night, all may be well; but if you show foolish mercy, to those who are not entitled to any such thing, it will be the last time that you will get a chance to exercise it. That is what I came to say."

"But will you not explain yourself more clearly, and tell me what is the danger?" asked George.

The Hindoo shook his head.

"It is the part of one who is warned, to guard himself against all dangers. In my country, when we hunt the tiger, we kill the beast, wherever we find it. The man that spares one, when he has a chance to slay it, is but a fool, and when he finds the teeth of the tiger in his flesh, and the claws tearing him to pieces, he cannot stop death by thinking of what he might have done, when it was in his power. You have been warned once, and the warning was of no avail. If this warning fails likewise, a stranger shall sit in the throne of the prince. Who is that at the door now, a friend or an enemy?"

George started to look round, saw no one; and, when he turned again, Ram Mandana was gone.

He felt his hair rising, he hardly knew why, at the mystery which encompassed this singular Hindoo, but the emergency was too close for him to waste time in hunting for the mode of exit of the adept.

Ram Mandana was gone, but he had come to warn Howard. He had done so once before, and the warning had come true, as George had found to his cost.

What did it mean now?

"Danger to my life?" he said to himself. "That can only mean from weapons, and I must arm myself as well as I can. He said it was coming to-night. That gives me time; but how much, no one can tell."

He rose and belted on his sword; took a pair of pistols, on which he knew he could depend to shoot straight, and finally sallied forth to visit the guards again.

When he went out, the clocks of the Tower were striking eleven, and he remembered Spring-Heel Jack's visit.

He found the soldiers at their posts, the guard-room quiet as usual; most of the men, not on duty, sleeping on their hard benches, ready for instant action, while the sergeant of the guard was nodding in his seat.

George went to him and told him that he expected a visit from the monster that had frightened so many people, and asked him whether the arms of the men were loaded.

"Why, no, your grace," said the sergeant in a way that showed the demand surprised him. "It ain't usually thought necessary here, your grace knows; but it can be done, if your grace wishes it."

"I do. See that all load their pieces at once, on post. If the monster comes, I want every man that sees him to waste no time, but to fire straight at him."

The sergeant hesitated.

"But there's a lady in the Constable's rooms, your grace; and the men are afraid of scaring the wits out of her."

"We must take the risk of that, for to-night. It is more important to catch and kill this scoundrel, that is making his pranks all over London, than to avoid frightening a lady."

So the sergeant set out on his tour of the posts, and George heard him give the orders he had received, while the men on post at

once put the butts of their pieces on the pavement, and began to load up.

Then the Tower sunk into its usual ghostly quietude, and George Howard went into the old Horse Armory, lighted only by the swinging lamp, with a sort of idea that there he would find the key to the mystery, that had baffled him and all the rest of the guards, so long.

He paced to and fro, examining the armor and all the nooks and corners in which it was possible for a man to be hid, for some time; but found nothing, and was going away to the head of the stairs, when he was startled by the sound of a terrible shriek, in the voice of Rose Reid, from the floor below.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SPRING-HEEL JACK'S LAST VISIT.

THE sound of the shriek came from the rooms of the Constable, the only place where he had not hitherto gone, for the reason that the old gentleman had forbidden him, by his cold behavior, to have anything to do with the safety of his daughter.

But the delicacy which had prevented the young officer from going in that direction vanished as soon as he heard the sound of the scream from below.

He knew that his old foe, Spring-Heel Jack, must have come again, and that Rose must have seen him. Down-stairs he rushed, as fast as he could go, a pistol in each hand.

He found the corridor at the foot of the stair the same as usual, the sentry standing as if dazed, his musket clutched in both hands, while he stared wildly round him, as if expecting to see something.

The man had not dared to leave his post, and George rushed to the Constable's rooms, when, to his horror, he found the door to be fast locked.

The silence within was more awful to him than the shriek he had heard, and he threw himself against the door with all his force, trying to burst it in and get at the foe.

As he struggled with the door, he shouted to the guard to come to his help, and they came running out of the guard-room, and hurrying to his assistance.

The door was too heavy to be forced easily, but when three or four big guardsmen made a simultaneous rush at it, and battered it with the butts of their muskets, it flew from its hinges, and they got in, to find the insensible body of old General Reid, stretched out in the arm-chair, where he had taken his nightly nap for many a year.

One glance at the pale and rigid face showed that the general was senseless, if not dead. George rushed into the next room, where he knew that the family apartments of the general had been, though of course he had never entered them before.

The next room to that in which the general was found turned out to be a bed-room, but it was empty, and the door communicating with the next apartment was locked, and had to be forced also.

It was done in an instant by the now thoroughly excited men, and a terrible sight lay before them.

The dead body of Chundoo, the *kiltmagar*, was stretched on the floor, the throat cut from ear to ear, the blood having formed a pool under his head, and a bloody sword lay by him.

Howard, his brain whirling with the dread of what he was going to see, went on ahead of the men, and entered the next room.

It was the kitchen of the little establishment, and empty of people; but the door beyond it opened into the passage.

Where, then, was Rose and her ayah, never separated from her mistress at night?

He had known that Surya always slept at the foot of her mistress's couch, and now both of them had disappeared.

He went into the passage and found the light burning as usual, but no signs of the absent one. The men began to look at each other as the superstition, latent in all their natures, broke out in the face of this mysterious disappearance, almost under their eyes.

"Follow me," said Howard impatiently, and he went on through the passage, sure that the fugitives must run on the sentries somewhere.

At last, as they were tracing their way

through the long corridor, no longer running, but stepping softly and looking nervously round them, the corridor was lighted up by a flash, followed by the heavy, bellowing report of a musket; and George rushed on in the direction of the shot, which came from the very corridor where Spring-Heel Jack had made his escape, the last time they had seen him.

As they advanced they heard a confused noise of shouting before them, and as they turned a corner, came in sight of a confused group of men, all tangled in a heap.

"We have him at last!" shouted Howard, and he dashed on.

But before he could get to the spot, out of the tangle of struggling men he had seen in the gloom, leaped the well-known figure of Spring-Heel Jack, and fled toward the very postern at which he had before disappeared.

Howard saw that two men were lying on the ground, and caught sight of the white robe of a woman among them. His heart sunk within him as he thought that Rose Reid was dead at last.

But he ran on ahead of all his men, and had the gratification of coming up with the monster, just as Spring-Heel Jack got to the postern door.

It was wide open, just as it had been before, though he had seen to its barring himself; and Spring-Heel Jack took the same leap over the moat, as he had done before.

But, this time, George did not attempt to run after the flying figure.

As the monster took his leap, the young officer halted and sunk on one knee, leveling his pistol. As Spring-Heel Jack alighted, he staggered for a moment, as if he slipped, and that moment gave George a good mark to aim at.

The pistol flashed, and as the shot sped, he saw Spring-Heel Jack stagger and nearly fall. Then he recovered himself and started to run off again, with his usual marvelous swiftness.

George had dropped his first pistol, and now rested the second on his knee, and fired, with the same careful aim.

A second time the report rung out, and this time Spring-Heel Jack dropped on the ground.

With a loud shout of triumph, George Howard ran back a few steps, and then took a flying leap himself across the great moat, which he had seen the monster leap.

But he could not quite reach the other side, though he managed to catch at the edge of the bank, and after a hard struggle, to scramble up and gain the glacis.

He looked back, and saw that the soldiers had gathered at the postern-door, astounded at the width of the leap, and he shouted out to them:

"Get ladders, or come round the other way! We have got him at last."

Then he ran on, and came up, within a few seconds, to the place where the mysterious monster, that had baffled them all for so long, lay on the glacis.

He knew that his shots must have taken effect, and expected to find the fugitive dead or badly wounded; but what was his surprise, when he got to the place where he thought it had been, to find that it had disappeared!

The night was dark enough to account for the disappearance, but how had the creature escaped the shots, which had certainly hit it?

As he revolved these thoughts in his mind, he was startled by the sound of a stealthy footstep behind him, and the next moment he confronted the well-known figure that had once before nearly killed him.

But this time he was not going to be taken unawares. In the very moment of turning, he had instinctively drawn his sword, and now he made a lunge, in the dark, against the figure, which took effect.

At least the blade struck something; but it seemed hard, and the point slipped off, as if it had met the resistance of armor.

The next moment he was grappled, but he managed to wrench himself free, and dealt the figure another blow, this time with the edge of the sword, on the head.

The night was so dark that he could only see a dim outline of his antagonist, but the second blow also took effect. He felt the blade strike; and this time it was not a hard surface that met it. He had cut into something, and he heard a deep curse, the first

time that Spring-Heel Jack had uttered an audible sound, since he had met him.

Then the figure advanced on him again with a leap, and he struck it a third blow.

He dealt the cut with all his strength, and it met the mark fairly.

Spring-Heel Jack uttered a wild yell of pain, and turned to flee again.

George, excited by his success, followed the fleeing figure, dealing blow after blow at its back, but it was too fleet for him, and took its way straight for the river, so that he did not succeed in sending home another blow, till he reached the borders of the water.

There was some light, owing to the reflection, and he saw the dark outline of a boat, into which Spring-Heel Jack leaped, with one of his flying bounds.

George shouted for help, and heard the steps of men, running from the side of the Tower by the stairs.

But the boat was already moving away in the darkness, and he longed for a pistol to fire at it. He could distinguish, against the gleam of the water, that there were two men in the boat, and then it was swallowed up in the fog, that hung over the river at all seasons of the year, more or less, just as the men at the water-stairs came running up.

To get out another boat and pursue was the affair of a few minutes, and the young officer was soon moving rapidly over the stream, in search of the mysterious visitor.

But when the men had pulled for an hour in all directions, and found nothing, they began to realize that Spring-Heel Jack had escaped them again, and Howard was compelled to pull back to the Tower, disappointed once more.

Then he went to the rooms of the old Constable, and found that General Reid had recovered his senses.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SECRET REVEALED.

THE news that General Reid was sensible again excited but little interest in the mind of the young officer, compared to what had become of the general's daughter, whom he had not yet seen; and Howard anxiously inquired whether the young lady had been found.

It was old Sergeant Hodge who told him, with a grave face and a voice of great sorrow, that the poor young lady had been found in the lower passage, where the monster had dropped her, her throat torn as by the claws of a wild beast, and that the doctor feared that she would not outlive the fright and injury.

"She's been took to her own room, and she's been axin' for your grace ever since she come to," the honest sergeant said.

George hurried to the rooms where he knew she had been taken, and met Tatham at the door.

The doctor beckoned to him to come into a side room, and said to him, in the hushed way in which people are apt to talk in cases of severe sickness or hurt:

"This is a bad business. Did you catch the villain at last?"

"No, but I think we have marked him. I hit him twice with a bullet, and twice with my sword, but he got off, in the river, in a boat. The man has confederates, and we shall find them out now."

Then he reverted to the subject nearest his heart by asking:

"And Rose, how is she? Is she hurt badly?"

"No, the injury, as far as that goes, is only a scratch, though it was meant for death, I am convinced. It seems that the man on guard in the lower passage saw the monster coming and challenged it, not seeing in the dark who it was. He says that the moment he called out his challenge there was a flame of fire, and he saw the monster drop the woman he was carrying. After that there was a confused fight, and the next thing he knew he was grappled by the monster, who wrenched his musket from him and knocked him down. This fellow must be a strong man, Howard."

"He is, as I know from experience; but there are others as strong as he. Is the general hurt much, doctor?"

"Worse than his child. He says that he was reading in his chair, when he heard a sound, and saw the monster close behind

him. He started up to get his pistols, when he was seized and a blow dealt him with something—he knows not what—which stunned him. I think it was a blunt and heavy weapon of some kind, like a club."

"Is—can I see—Miss Reid?"

The doctor hesitated.

"I hardly know whether it is safe. She wants to see you, and has asked for you; but she is in such an excitable state that I fear to permit the interview."

"Does her father object?"

"No; that is the strange thing about it. When she asked him if he would allow it, he said he would interfere no more. He seems to be broken down by the last visit of this scoundrel. But I must warn you of one thing."

"And what is that?"

"That the young lady is a little light in her head, and that you must not believe every fancy that she will tell you."

"Has she told you anything?"

"No, but she seems very anxious to see you, to tell you something or other. She keeps raving about its being important to you, and all that sort of thing. In short, I fear that she has taken a notion into her head that she has discovered the identity of this man, that has baffled everybody else, and I would not trust to her fancies too much, or it may lead you into a law-suit. That is all."

And the doctor waved his hand toward the room whence he had just come, into which Howard went, thoughtfully and gravely, not knowing what to expect exactly, from the doctor's account.

He found Rose lying back on a sofa, her father near her, and her ayah weeping at her feet.

It was the first time he had seen Surya, and, had she been alone, he would have been tempted to ask her what had become of her, at the time when her mistress was in danger.

But the sight of Rose took away all other thoughts from his mind; and his heart beat so that he fancied that it could be heard, as she raised her eyes to his, and said:

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!"

He saw that her neck was bound up, just as his own had been, showing that she had been hurt, as he himself had been; but her voice was quite strong, as she spoke.

Then she turned to her father, and asked him:

"Will you let me see him alone?"

The old general rose slowly from his seat, and said to George, with a weary air:

"You have conquered, sir. The child loves you, and I can deny her nothing. I recall my decision, and you are free to say what you like."

He seemed to be broken down with his hurt, and the grief that consumed him at the sight of his daughter's injuries.

But Howard, with a profound bow, said:

"I shall take no advantage of your kindness, sir. As far as I am concerned, you can remain."

"No, no," said Rose, eagerly. "What I have to say to you, no one else must hear. It concerns yourself alone."

The general added, with less sadness:

"You are quite welcome to speak to my daughter, sir, and I will return when she has spoken."

So saying, he left the room, and, at a sign from Rose, Surya followed him.

Howard, not knowing what to make of it all, was doubtful what to do, when Rose said to him, in a low, confidential tone:

"I know who the monster is, at last."

Then he started, and his face flushed, as he asked her:

"Are you sure? Remember that it will not do to make any mistakes."

"I have made no mistakes," she answered.

"He spoke to me, and I saw him, face to face, at last. It is your own brother."

George stared at her in surprise.

"How do you know?"

"He came to me," she said, in a low voice, her face pale with the recollection of what she had undergone, "in his horrible dress. I was not asleep, though the rest of the people were. My father was in his room, reading, he tells me, and Surya had asked me for a leave to go and visit Sergeant Hodge's wife, in another part of the Tower. Chundoo was the only servant in the rooms when he

came. The first I heard of his coming was a struggle in the room where my father was reading. I ran in, and saw the monster deal him a blow on the head with a heavy candlestick. Then Chundoo, who had been asleep, came into the room and attacked him with a sword; but before he could deal the monster a blow, it had grappled with him, and dashed him on the floor like a child; snatched the sword from Chundoo's hand, and dealt him a stroke across his throat, which nearly took his head off. Then he threw the bloody sword down, and sprang at me. I do not know what had kept me quiet so long; but I seemed to be bound by a spell. But when I felt his odious arms round me, I was desperate, and I gave a shriek, and tore at his face, as I thought, not knowing what I did. And then the mask he wore came off in my hand, and I saw the face of your brother. Then he spoke out."

"And what did he say?" asked George, seeing that she paused.

Rose shuddered violently, as she went on:

"I shall never forget his words. He almost crushed me in his arms, and he hissed in my ears: 'So you've found me out, my lady! Then that seals your fate!' Then he caught me by the throat, and I must have fainted; for everything seemed to be growing dark, and I knew no more till I found myself here, with the servants all round me, and my father told me what had happened. But remember that there is no mistake. It was your brother's face, and your brother's voice, that I saw and heard. *He is the man, and no other.*"

Then she sunk back on her couch, as if completely exhausted; and George, fearful that she was going to faint again, called for her father. He waited by the couch till she spoke again:

"I am so glad you came. Now I can die happy, for you will have your own at last."

"It will be valueless, without it is shared by her who gave it back to me," he said solemnly. "Rose Reid, if you will not live, I take no steps to get my rights."

She smiled faintly.

"I will try to live," she said, in a low voice. "Life is worth living now."

Then he went out from the room, and sent in the doctor to her, waiting anxiously for his report. By the time Tatham returned, the light of the dawn was streaming in at the windows of the Tower, for it was midsummer, and the sun rose at four o'clock in the morning.

Tatham wore a face of much more cheerfulness than when he went in.

"She will get well," he said. "After all, there are times when we doctors do not know as much as our patients. The talk with you has relieved her mind, and she is tranquil at last."

"Then good-by, doctor," said the beggar duke. "I only waited for that. Now I am going away, to act on what she told me."

He sent for his orderly, who had not made his appearance all night, much to his surprise, and found that Spring had disappeared, and was not to be found in the Tower.

But he remembered that he had promised the Gypsy a leave to visit his family, and concluded that Spring, in his usual style, had taken the leave for granted.

Therefore he took another orderly, armed himself as if he was going out against an enemy, called a coach from the royal stables, and drove off in the first blush of the dawn.

CHAPTER XL.

CONCLUSION.

"DRIVE to Norfolk House," was the order that Howard gave to the coachman, and the vehicle drew up at the door within a very short time from that in which it left the Tower.

Howard sprang out as soon as the man stopped the horses, and said to his orderly:

"Follow me, and be ready, if there is any trouble, to stop their nonsense."

The man looked surprised but said quietly:

"Very well, your grace."

Then George ran up the steps and delivered a thundering knock at the door.

It was still so early that there was no one in the streets, and the echo of the knock, as it sounded through the great house, was that of emptiness.

It had the indescribable sound that tells that there is no one near to answer the knock.

And indeed no one came, though George knocked again and again, for nearly five minutes.

Then at last a man put his head out of a window, up near the roof, and shouted out:

"Oo's 'ere, at this time of morning? Get hout of that, ye impident raxals!"

"You come down 'ere, if you don't want to get in trouble," shouted back the orderly, for George made him a sign and kept out of sight himself in the recesses of the great doorway.

"Don't ye know enough to come down, or dy'e want to keep his majesty's officers awaitin'?"

The stern voice, and the sight of the scarlet uniform below, had its effect on the head at the window, for there was a frightened "Oh Lord!" and the head disappeared.

Not long after, they heard a step on the stairs; and Jarvis himself, the gorgeous flunky, made his appearance, looking flurried, as he recognized the duke.

"Where's Mr. Howard?" asked Howard sternly.

"Indeed, your grace," said Jarvis, trembling as if frightened "master's been hout all night, and only jest got in, sir, and went to bed, and it's as much as my life's worth to disturb 'im. Please don't say you want to see 'im."

"Was any one with him when he came home?" Howard asked, in the same stern, quick way.

"Please your grace, there warn't no one but Mr. Spring, as brought 'im 'ome and took care of 'im."

George studied the face of the flunky, and saw that he was dreadfully frightened at something or other, so he said sternly:

"Show me the way to your master's room at once, and if you try to alarm the house, or prevent my going there, I'll kill you with as little remorse as I would a mad dog. Lead on."

As he spoke, he drew a pistol and cocked it, with a sound that sent the cold tremors down the back of the luckless Jarvis, who said at once:

"Certainly, your grace, with pleasure; I'll do it, at once, but, *please*, don't p'int that thing this way, 'cause it might go hoff, sir."

George waved the pistol in a way that terrified him still more, saying:

"Go on, and don't look back, or I'll shoot."

Jarvis shook all over, but obeyed with alacrity, and led the way through the broad hall, and up the great stone staircase, which George had last descended at the funeral of his kinsman, till he pointed to a door, and said in a whisper of great terror:

"That's the place, your grace; but I daresn't do no more, not if you kill me. It's jest as good to die one way as another."

George nodded absently.

"Get out of the way, then," he said, and then to his orderly he added:

"Draw your sword and follow me."

The man obeyed, with the stiff manner of the old soldier, and George put his hand on the door, turned the handle, and opened.

He saw before him a large room, magnificently furnished, with a great state-bed in the middle, and by the bedside, fast asleep in a chair, sat his own orderly, John Spring.

But in the bed, with his head swathed in bloody bandages, lay the man he had come after, and, as George entered the room, Oliver Howard opened his eyes and saw him.

George stepped in and pointed to the unconscious Gypsy, who, from his heavy breathing, was evidently drunk and stupid.

"Jackson," he said to the soldier by his side, "if that fellow gives any trouble, remember that he is absent without leave, and cut him down if he offers to make trouble. You know who he is?"

Jackson, saluted, with a grim smile.

"Ay, ay, your grace, I know the man. That's the Gypsy that 'ad to be hired t'other day. What a impident raxal to come in 'ere!"

"Take care of him, then," said George, and then he turned to the man in bed, who had made no movement all this time, but lay

there, staring at him, as if he had not quite recovered his senses.

"Now, sir," he said sternly, "it is a question if you or I own this house. Are you prepared to argue it with me, or are you better prepared to go before his majesty's courts, to answer for your pranks as Spring-Heel Jack? You have been found out at last."

Still Oliver made no reply. He tried to raise his hand to his head, and opened his mouth, but the lips seemed dry, and at last he managed to whisper hoarsely:

"Drink, drink! I'm chokin', man!"

George cast his eyes round the room, and saw, on a little table, not far off, the array of bottles and glasses, that smacked of a late debauch. He went there, took a bottle, filled a glass with wine and water, and brought it back to the invalid, who drank it eagerly.

Then Oliver said, in a louder voice than before, but still very weak:

"Send the men out of the room. It's all over. You have the luck, after all, George."

He seemed so weak that George was puzzled, but he did as requested by roughly shaking the sleeping Gypsy, and shouting in his ear:

"Spring, get out of this; do you hear me?"

Spring started awake in a fright, and as he saw the face of the officer who had been his chief but lately, and then turned his eyes round the room, on all the magnificence, he seemed to be bewildered, but finally got up and shambled out of the room, followed by Jackson, who seemed as if he only wanted a chance to get at him, out of sight of the gentlemen in the room.

No sooner had the door closed than they heard sounds of blows outside, and then came a fall, as the irate Jackson, who had suffered from the Gypsy's fighting abilities when he had come home drunk, on a former occasion, anxious to get even with him, made a sudden and furious attack on him with the flat of his sword, and knocked the Gypsy senseless, so as to save further trouble, before he could defend himself, in his almost helpless condition.

But George had no time to attend to anything that took place outside of the room, for he was too busy inside.

Oliver, as soon as the door had closed, began in a low, faint voice:

"I know what you come for, and it's all right; you won't have to wait long. I know what you've found out. Mathias Spring was here last night to tell me, and if it hadn't been for that pistol of yours, I'd have been Duke of Norfolk to-day. But you've had the best of it all through. I give in at last."

He was evidently weak and prostrate, and George, filled with pity, when he saw his foe helpless and remembered that he had thought this man his brother, asked wistfully:

"Oliver, why have you played all these wicked tricks, and why have you, especially, played them on Rose Reid?"

Oliver smiled faintly but sarcastically, as if he delighted in thwarting the curiosity of the man who had got the better of him.

"That's nothing to you," he said. "You are no brother of mine, as you have often said, and I have known it all the time. If you had died, I should have been the Duke of Norfolk, in spite of all; but as you live, and I am too weak to sign my name to a will that gives away my property, you will succeed to it, and people will say that your brother did the best he could for you, after all. You hit me hard last night, and I am not one that believes in doctors; but brother John there (my real brother) told me that the shot was sure death, and since that, we two only thought of how to live a short life and a merry one. We got home and drank three bottles, and now you will be the Duke of Norfolk, with all the fortune, in a few hours."

George saw that he was speaking the truth as soon as he examined the wound.

The big bullet of his dueling pistol had penetrated the breast of the young man on the left side, not far from the heart, and the only wonder was how he had managed to get off, when he made his leap into the boat.

"Ay, ay," said Oliver, with a faint, proud smile, as he said this, "there ain't many men could have played Spring-Heel Jack; and there will never be another, George. If I'd

only stuck to what I had, and not been rash, I might have had fun enough for the next three years to make me ready to die content."

"And do you mean to say that you have done all these things for nothing in the world but amusement?" asked George in amazement.

"Ay, ay," the other almost whispered, for he was growing very weak now. "That was all, that was all, till I saw you and Rose Reid were getting thick together. Then I was bound that you should never marry her, and never have an heir. I wanted to be duke; and after I got the fortune, it was worse than before. What is the use of being a rich man, if another man can go in to dinner before you and be called duke. I was determined that I would be duke, before I died, and that was the reason I went after Rose, this last time. If I had succeeded, and those confounded soldiers had not come when they did, I should have killed her, and you would never have gotten over it. But now it is all over, and I have made no will, and you will soon be the richest duke in England. I say, George—"

Here he paused, and the reckless look faded out of his face.

"Well?" asked George coldly, for he could not feel much pity for one who had wronged him so foully.

"Let me be buried as a Howard, at least. Remember that I might have killed you, the other night, and I didn't."

"And why didn't you?"

"Because—well, you won't believe it, but it is a fact that, when I was just going to strike you down, something told me that you were the only brother I had ever known, and that I ought to be ashamed of myself for doing it. Besides, remember that, if you don't bury me as your brother, the property won't go to you. The Romany have seen that it's all hard and fast, that way."

"You may be sure of that," said George, in a bitter tone. "The will of my old kinsman has settled that. Yes, you shall have your wish, if that will do you any good."

The face of the dying man—for he was dying fast—lit up at the promise, and he whispered:

"I was not fit to be taken into the family. The Romany blood won't make a rye, and the more I tried, the worse it was. But I can die like the best rye of them all, and the world won't never know but what I was a gentleman."

And it never did. A stately marble monument marks the resting-place of the Romany heir, and long years after, when Rose was Duchess of Norfolk, and George the richest, as well as the premier peer of England, he was often known to say to his wife:

"Poor Oliver was not so bad, after all, and he might have done a great deal worse than he did, when he had everything his own way."

THE END.

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